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WE'RE #1
FOR ALL THINGS

PS5

What does next-gen
really mean?

STAAAARS!

RESIDENT EVIL 3

Guns, tentacles,
rockets... Nemesis'
arsenal revealed

ONLY ON PS4

GHOST OF TSUSHIMA

Special 14-page blowout! We explore PS4's hottest new game

IN-DEPTH REVIEW

ZOMBIE ARMY 4

Rebellion's shooter rated – a flesh take on an old idea?

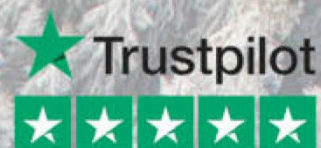
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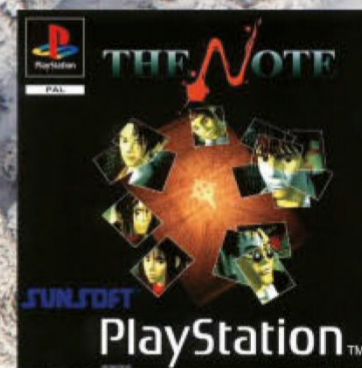
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Welcome



GAME OF THE MONTH

Zombie Army 4: Dead War

BEST GHOST GAME

Ghostbusters: The Videogame Remastered

Open worlds have come a long way on PlayStation 4, and Ghost Of Tsushima (p48) is rounding out this generation on a high as it aims to be a culmination of everything modern gaming has become known for – a moving story and a vast, detailed world to approach any way you wish. Our 14-page feature takes a closer look.

It's something we expect to see more of as PlayStation 5 kicks off Sony's exciting next generation at the end of this year, and we pose some questions about what to expect on p6. Can you wait?

While this issue features exciting games coming to PS4 very soon, including Resident Evil 3 (p12), Doom Eternal (p32), and Granblue Fantasy: Relink (p42), it's sad to hear some big hitters are delayed. Final Fantasy VII: Remake, Cyberpunk 2077, Marvel's Avengers, Marvel's Iron Man VR, and Dying Light 2 have all slipped. The bright side is they'll be even better when they land.

Ian Dean

EDITOR

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on page 62

THIS MONTH'S GHOSTLY SAMURAI ASSASSINS



Oscar Taylor-Kent
GAMES EDITOR

After getting hands-on with Doom Eternal Oscar has been drawing sigils all over OPM Towers' walls. There'll be Hell to pay.

GAME OF THE MONTH

Atelier Dusk Trilogy

BEST GHOST GAME

Murdered: Soul Suspect



Jess Kinghorn
STAFF WRITER

Looking back at your first games makes Jess feel sentimental for memory cards, the OG SSDs.

GAME OF THE MONTH

Tokyo Dark: Remembrance

BEST GHOST GAME

Fatal Frame II: Crimson Butterfly



Miriam McDonald
OPERATIONS EDITOR

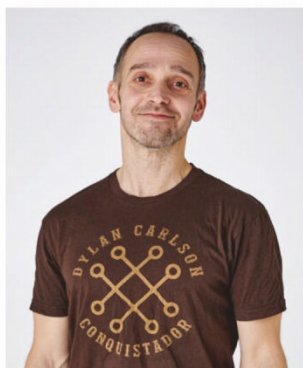
A pirate-themed RPG? Any excuse for Mim to wear the 'I'-patch, her fancy-dress grammar-busting production tool.

GAME OF THE MONTH

Pillars Of Eternity II

BEST GHOST GAME

Ghost Giant



Milford Coppock
MANAGING ART EDITOR

We thought we had a new art ed, but the masked man turned out to be Milf getting into the ninja mood. Shuriken you believe it?

GAME OF THE MONTH

Zombie Army 4: Dead War

BEST GHOST GAME

Maximo: Ghosts To Glory

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Ten reasons why the cinematic samurai epic will be one of 2020's must-play adventures.

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Reminiscing on 25 years of PlayStation gaming – and looking ahead to PS5.

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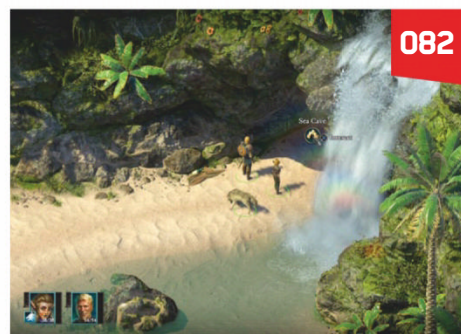
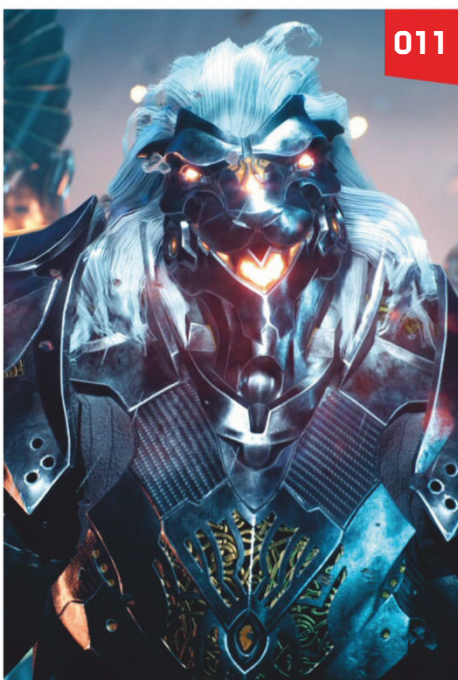
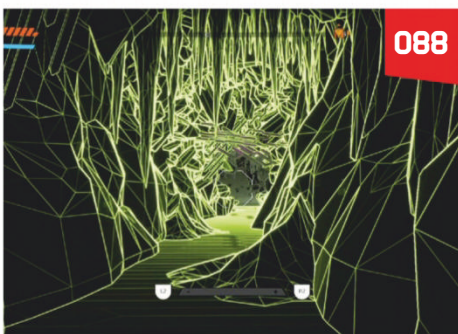
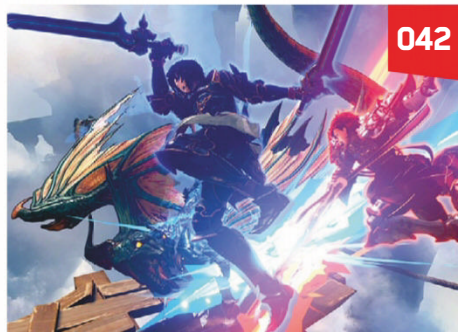
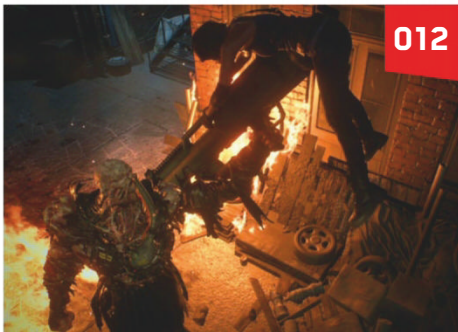
076 ZOMBIE ARMY 4: DEAD WAR

Hordes of zombies *and* an undead shark? You're going to need a bigger, er, gun.



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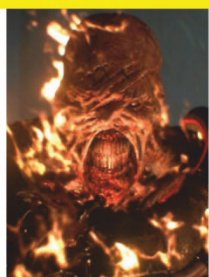
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PS5 is almost here and Sony's powerful new console has us pondering all sorts of next-gen questions.



PS5

“PS4 PRO WAS A BRILLIANT 4K STOP-GAP, BUT THIS WINTER PS5 WILL PROVIDE ONE HELL OF A LEAP FORWARD.”



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Spring's big releases get delayed.

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No escaping Resi 3's Nemesis.

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Explore Skyrim next in TESQ.

The Big 10

STORIES EVERYONE'S TALKING ABOUT

What does PS5 really mean for next gen?

Why Sony's powerful new console could kickstart a dream new generation

01

the year of PlayStation 5. PS4 Pro was a brilliant 4K stop-gap, but when Sony's new console launches this winter, get ready for one hell of a leap forward. There shouldn't be any half measures this time out: PS5 will be the next-gen real deal.

As we write this no doubt new PS5 details and rumours have circulated online – perhaps Sony has even shown us the hardware. But while the Ghost of OPM Past waits for PS5 to be revealed in the coming weeks, we can make some informed speculation in the here and now.

We know PS5 dev kits have been in studios' hands for quite some time, and we have a good idea of just how powerful the cutting-edge tech under the hood is. Marc Cerny has confirmed PS5 houses a custom GPU from AMD's Navi line of chips, speedy

Thought 2020 was Year Of The Rat? Think again. The Chinese Zodiac is way off: *this* is

GDDR6 RAM, and an AMD Ryzen CPU rocking Zen 2 microarchitecture. It's also been confirmed PS5 comes with an SSD to slash load times, it's compatible with PS VR, the console supports 8K in some capacity, and that AMD's fancy chips house a custom 3D audio unit to deliver immersive sound. Phew!

Sony has even been hinting PS5 will have exclusive games that won't be playable on PS4. This is interesting for a couple of reasons. First, it suggests the firm is drawing a line in the sand; the PS4 era is coming to a close and the next-gen future is here. It's also a move that goes against what the competition is planning. Microsoft has promised all its first-party games will run on both its upcoming console and its current machines for the first year or so of the new system's life.

Looking back at Sony's past console launches, history tells us PS5 will almost certainly hit shelves with next-gen exclusives, some of which may introduce new hardware-specific features. The likes of Killzone Shadow Fall not only delivered

007





The Big 10

STORIES EVERYONE'S TALKING ABOUT



SYSTEM (DUAL)SHOCK

The DualShock 4 getting its back button add-on so late in life feels like Sony's way of prepping players for PS5's pad. Surely the DualShock 5 will have bumpers on its rear? Get up close with the Back Button Attachment on p14.

>>

cutting-edge rendering techniques, Guerrilla's first-person shooter taught us to use the DualShock 4's touchpad. Before that, PS3 hit UK shelves with Motorstorm in pole position, the racer delivering a level of terrain deformation and vehicle physics that would have crippled PS2.

GEN & TONIC

But are next-gen launch exclusives a good thing? Absolutely. While it's never nice when one set of gamers get left behind, this is a technology-driven industry. Without significant leaps in tech there cannot be the sort of seismic steps forward hardcore PlayStation fans demand. Just imagine if Uncharted: Drake's Fortune had been forced to straddle the cross-gen divide. To progress, we need games that cater to PS5's ultra-powerful components, not halfway-house titles that have been programmed to support both PS5 and PS4's now-seven-year-old tech.

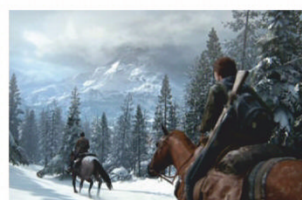
A new console also means new IP, and considering how many amazing exclusive properties PS4 enjoyed (Horizon Zero Dawn! Bloodborne! Until Dawn! Days Gone! The Last Guardian! Marvel's Spider-Man!) PS5 has some seriously large loafers to fill. Speaking of Insomniac, Sony will surely want an inventive IP from the now-first-party Ratchet & Clank dev within the console's first year. Marvel's Spider-Man released almost

18 months ago, time enough to create something original for PS5 while the core team work on the sequel to Marvel's Spider-Man.

Naughty Dog must have something up its tremendously talented sleeve, too. PlayStation's premier developer has been a two-game studio ever since Uncharted 3: Drake's Deception wrapped. With The Last Of Us Part II out in May, a new PlayStation 5 IP from the Santa Monica-based studio can't be far off. There are persistent rumours of a new Uncharted from Sony's San Diego Studio, too. Will the series find new places to explore only on PS5?

TOP DOG

What about Joel and Ellie's sequel? Will one of the last heavy hitters of the generation come to PS5? PS4's The Last Of Us: Remastered suggests so – don't be surprised if a PS5 version of TLOU Part II delivers 4K/60fps Clicker carnage. Similarly, we'd expect Ghost Of Tsushima to get a handsome PS5 upgrade. Whether you'll have to pay for these next-gen editions if you already own



the PS4 versions remains to be seen, but we really hope Sony offers a free upgrade path by way of digital downloads. Could PS5 even pack in a graphics enhancer for last-gen titles similar to PS2's polygon-smoothing feature or PS4 Pro's Boost mode? History suggests it may.

While we're hugely excited by the PS5-shaped future, there's also the tantalising prospect of how the supercharged console could tap into PlayStation's past. Recent rumours suggest PS5 could play games spanning every generation of PlayStation, from PS1 to PS4. Whether this can be achieved through disc updates and patches or a cloud-based solution via PS Now remains to be seen, but if PS5 is able to provide backwards capability covering four generations of PlayStation, it would be the ultimate console for both the present and the past. It's a dream at the time of writing, but here's hoping.

With tech specs that run rings around PS4 Pro, a new DualShock to look forward to, killer exclusive IPs only Sony studios can make, and tantalising rumoured back-compatible features, we're about ready to keel over we're so excited. The next-gen future starts with PS5, and the future is almost here.

* For all the latest PS5 stories, be sure to check out gamesradar.com/uk/opm.

■ ■ THERE'S THE TANTALISING PROSPECT OF HOW PS5 TAPS INTO PLAYSTATION'S PAST. ■ ■

PS5 God Of War is in development, with Sony Santa Monica already working on mo-cap.



■ This was the closest PS4 got to PS1 emulation. Could PS5 change that?



■ Uncharted could return from a new studio – so what is Naughty Dog doing?

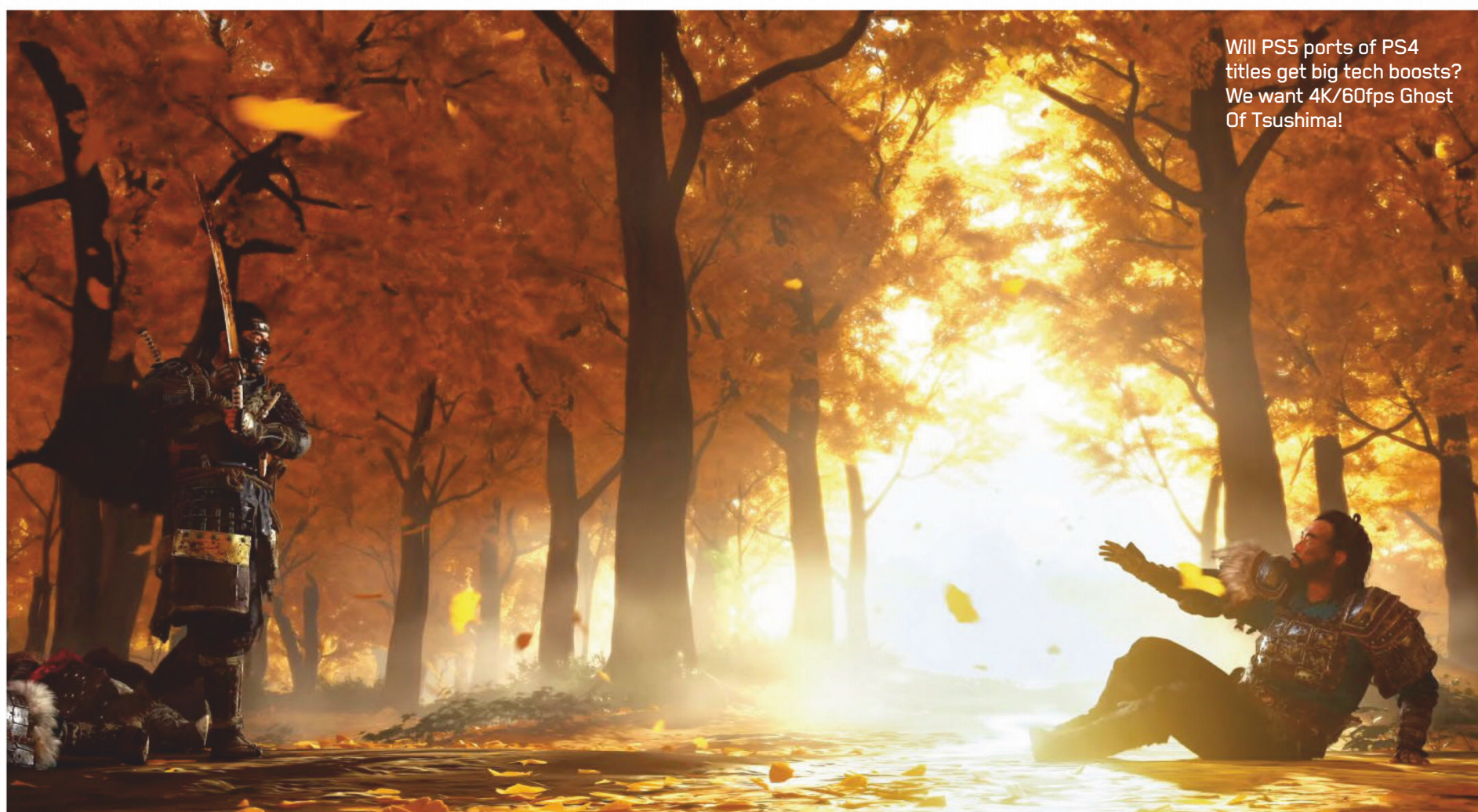


Considering TLOU Remastered was such an ace port, surely Part II will come to PS5.



009

■ PS VR will work with PS5 but we'd expect a hardware upgrade too, while PlayStation tech guru Marc Cerny has confirmed PS5's GPU will be killer.



Will PS5 ports of PS4 titles get big tech boosts? We want 4K/60fps Ghost Of Tsushima!

Three huge releases have been delayed. What does this mean for PS5's launch lineup?



It's time to play the waiting game

FFVII Remake, Cyberpunk 2077, and Marvel's Avengers delayed

02

As Nick Fury will tell you, putting together a team takes time – at least five movies and a few billion dollars. Unfortunately, you'll have to wait a little longer for the videogame teamup. Developer Crystal Dynamics announced that Marvel's Avengers has been delayed from its 15 May release to a new date of 4 September. The studio released a statement apologising for the delay and explaining the reasons behind it.

The dev decided that if it were to deliver on its mission statement of "an original story-driven campaign, engaging co-op, and compelling content for years to come," more

SEPTEMBER IS NOW A STELLAR MONTH FOR PS4.

time was needed. Crystal Dynamics explained that it intends the final game to be "the ultimate Avengers gaming experience," and went on to say: "As fans ourselves, it's an honour and a privilege to work with these legendary characters and we know what these Super Heroes mean to us and True Believers

around the world."

CD Projekt Red delivered a similar message. The studio has chosen to delay the highly anticipated RPG Cyberpunk 2077 to

17 September, ensuring a battle for your wallet at the end of the year.

"We are currently at a stage where the game is complete and playable, but there's still work to be done," said co-founder Marcin Iwinski and head of studio Adam Badowski in



team talk

"It's sad to see these games get delayed, (and we can add Marvel's Iron Man VR and Dying Light 2 to the 'Delayed' list), but it does mean we'll get polished games at launch that shouldn't need countless patches to work. Has the industry finally returned to the disc-based PS2 days?"

Ian Dean
Editor

a joint statement. "Night City is massive – full of stories, content, and places to visit – but due to the sheer scale and complexity of it all, we need more time to finish playtesting, fixing, and polishing."

Both games are now out at the end of September, which not only makes it a stellar month for PS4 but raises questions about what this means for PS5's launch lineup. Can we expect enhanced editions of both games on the new hardware? Or will these titles be the first big test of Sony's next-gen crossplay strategy? Either way we win, as long as we can stand the wait.

A MERE MONTH

There was further news of delays when Square Enix announced the PS4-exclusive Final Fantasy VII Remake will now miss its planned 3 March release and will instead



BRIGHT SOULS

Though it's running on a PC and a year old, the leaked Godfall demo reveals the game's unique visual style. It's certainly glossy, like a bright, campy Dark Souls – which is a good thing in our book.



The Big 10

STORIES EVERYONE'S TALKING ABOUT

Will Godfall be your first must-play PlayStation 5 game of 2020?



PS5's Godfall looks heavenly

First gameplay of PS5's confirmed launch game

launch on 10 April. This delay of one month isn't so bad given we've waited almost the entire PS4 generation for this incredible-looking ground-up remake.

"We are making this tough decision in order to give ourselves a few extra weeks to apply final polish to the game and to deliver you with the best possible experience," wrote producer Yoshinori Kitase on Square Enix's official website. "I, on behalf of the whole team, want to apologise to everyone, as I know this means waiting for the game just a little bit longer."

These delays are a reminder that developing videogames is a human activity, and it takes hard work to meet players' high expectations. We say: devs, take your time.

★ What do you think of the delays? Tweet us @OPM_UK with your views.

03

Anything PlayStation 5 will send us into a fever, and leaked in-game footage of confirmed next-gen launch title Godfall certainly ticked the boxes.

Though developer Counterplay Games later took to Twitter to reveal the footage is credible, it also offers some context.

"We can confirm that the circulating trailer is year-old PC footage used as part of an internal presentation. We are energised by your excitement and look forward to showing you just how far this game has come. Stay tuned for a more detailed look soon!"

So while what is shown is not running on a PlayStation 5 developer kit, and doesn't appear to feature the bells and whistles expected, such as ray tracing, it gives us an idea how this anticipated launch game will

play. Notably as a Dark Souls RPG with elements of Destiny, if directed by Thor Raganarok's Taika Waititi.

The demo showcases the game's fantasy gothic architecture, but the gloom that permeates much of FromSoftware's work has been replaced by gleaming golden sunsets and the glow of neon lights.

Combat reveals some interesting ideas, as not only does it appear to replicate Dark Souls' duelling system where you're one hit from defeat, it also looks like enemies are able to adapt to your

attacks. In one scene an armour-clad knight appears to change its stance twice as the AI seeks a way past the player's defence.

Other enemies spin attack, some launch magical, illuminating strikes, and the player avatar swings a huge sword. It looks impressive.

★ We'll be taking a closer look Godfall on PlayStation 5 very soon. Exciting!

IT LOOKS LIKE ENEMIES ARE ABLE TO ADAPT TO YOUR ATTACKS.

“NEMESIS TANGLES
WITH JILL USING HIS FAMED
ROCKET LAUNCHER, WHICH
SOMEHOW LOOKS LARGER
IN THIS REMAKE.”



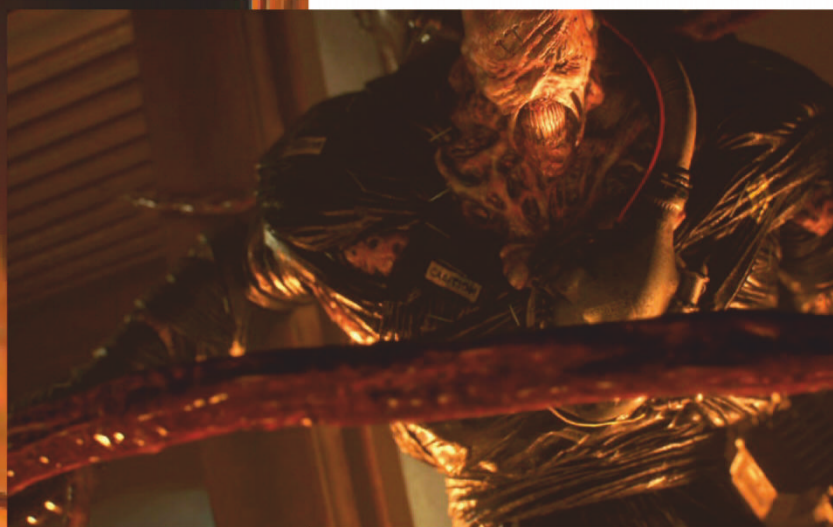
MEET YOUR NEMESIS

"We went through a number of different concepts before the director settled on the current Nemesis," says producer Peter Fabiano. Nemesis was sculpted in Zbrush and modelled in Maya.



The Big 10

STORIES EVERYONE'S TALKING ABOUT



■ Evade Nemesis' rockets and he'll get in close with his tentacle attacks.



■ Stray too close to Nemesis and he'll try to grab Jill for a life-sapping attack.

RE3's Nemesis gets tooled up

Resident Evil 3's villain gets a revamp on PS4

04

"When considering Nemesis' design and AI, we were impressed by what the RE2 team had

done with Tyrant but we wanted to make sure that Nemesis was his own brand of fear. You'll see that when you play the game," producer Peter Fabiano tells.

New footage reveals Nemesis tangling with Jill using his rocket launcher. He'll use it at a distance, but as the shots on these pages reveal he's happy to get up close too. These are attacks we survived in the original game but this time his arsenal doesn't end there. New to this remade Resident Evil 3 is Nemesis' flamethrower.

As well as giving us a more detailed look at Nemesis, the recent reveal showed off a redesigned version of the Hunter. We saw this lizard-like creature being peppered with bullets by Carlos during the hospital mission.

When it comes to Carlos' revamped sections of the game, producer Pete Fabiano has already told us he'll be returning in an "interesting way," and in the latest footage we see the merc entering Raccoon City police station. There are rumoured to be expanded roles for side-characters such as Tyrell Patrick and Brad Vicker as well.

TAKE IT ONLINE

Speaking about online mode Resistance Fabiano confirmed to us it's "not actually canon", adding: "It would be a similar time in the '90s". He says: "You'll remember that the Japanese subtitle for RE3 was 'Last Escape'. Both of these titles have characters that are trying to escape somewhere or something, so thematically it made sense."

Fabiano explains one goal of Resistance's inclusion with RE3 is to approach the challenge of building out an online game set in the Resident Evil universe.

★ Come back for issue 173 when we'll be going hands-on with the game.



the big shot

eagle-eyed analysis



Rejoice, battle royale buffs! This peripheral means you can easily aim and jump at the same time!

Controller gets back buttons

DualShock 4's functionality extended

05

Made to slot into the jacks below the PS button on the back of your DualShock, the DualShock 4

Back Button Attachment has fully programmable buttons and opens up new ways to play. The tiny digital display at its centre details what's currently mapped to the buttons on either side, and you can save up to three different combinations at a time.

The back paddles make the most of how you'd naturally hold

the DualShock 4 – no awkward stretching required – and the attachment overall feels unobtrusive over hours of play. At £25.99, it's a great compromise if you want a more customisable controller without having to cough up for a third-party pro model. And while most of the business is around the back, as an unexpected bonus it also makes the front of the controller look like it's happy to see you.

* The Back Button Attachment goes on sale 14 Feb exclusively at GAME.



The attachment is a dinky little thing, ensuring your DualShock 4 still feels light in weight.



number game

we do the maths

103

Million active users on PSN every month. That's a lot of gamers!

10,000

Votes on Lego's Ideas site could get the Untitled Goose Game set made.

04

New figures based on Cyberpunk 2077 join the Funko Pop lineup.

242

The number of PlayStation titles Masahiro Sakurai played last year.

25,000

V-Bucks: the grand prize in Fortnite's emote contest on TikTok.

110+

Hours for our Jess to beat Persona 5, but how long will Royal take you?

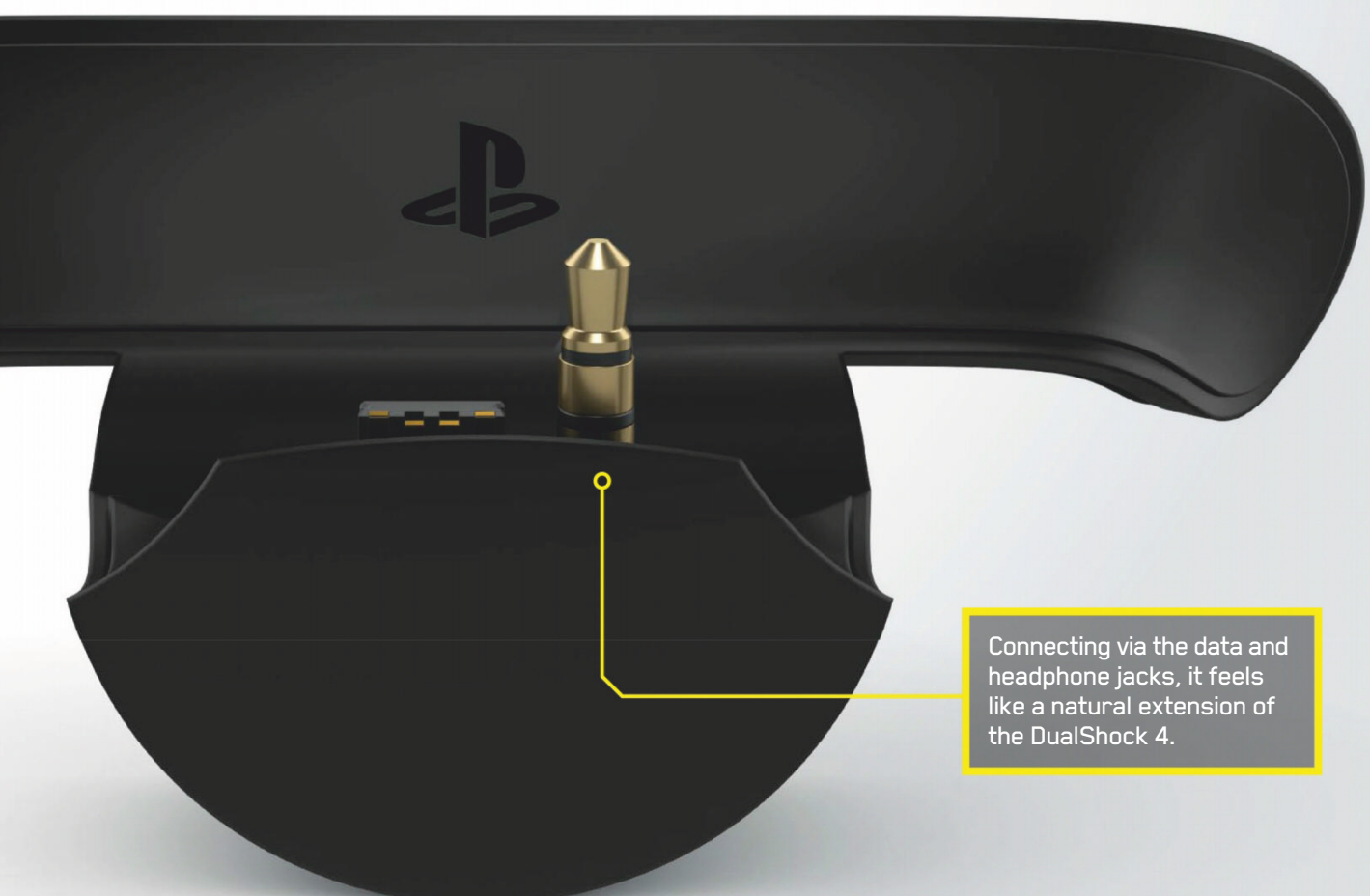
06

Months of development time to build the city of Magnolia in 3D for Fairy Tail.



These are bonus buttons, not triggers designed to respond to a varied amount of pressure.

Tap the back screen to cycle through programmed button combinations; hold it down to remap them.



Connecting via the data and headphone jacks, it feels like a natural extension of the DualShock 4.

Skyrim is one of Elder Scrolls' most popular regions. Will you be heading back?

016

The Skyrim's the limit for Elder Scrolls Online

The Dark Heart Of Skyrim's year-long event gives us the chills

06

Nothing can stop Skyrim. You've probably already experienced this incredible open-world RPG in

one of its many forms – original flavour, remaster, PS VR edition – and this year you can venture back into its snow-covered mountains in The Elder Scrolls Online's year-long event, Dark Heart Of Skyrim.

You can familiarise yourself with the direction of travel with the Harrowstorm DLC releasing in March. Containing two dungeons to battle through, Icereach demands you investigate a series of unexplained storms in the Sea Of

A MORE SINISTER TAKE ON THE REGION THAN WE'RE USED TO.

Ghosts, while Unhallowed Grave has you exploring a mysterious burial site. Harrowstorm is, however, really just a taster of where Zenimax Online Studios is set to take us in 2020. The real meat and mead of this Nordic-inspired adventure will be served in the Greymoor Chapter. A free prologue quest will be

released to connect Harrowstorm to Greymoor.

The Elder Scrolls Online: Greymoor spans the Western region of Skyrim, not seen in the

online game before. The adventure takes in the city of Solitude, and the vast underground region of Blackreach, a vampiric city with its own stories to tell. The developer estimates this bloodsucker's gothic



team talk

"I put hundreds of hours into The Elder Scrolls V, and even dipped into its PS VR edition, so the inclusion of Skyrim as the next Chapter of The Elder Scrolls Online will get me playing again this summer. I doubt I'll be alone in these snowy mountains."

Ian Dean
Editor

region will make up 40 percent of the Greymoor expansion, with a new vampire lord to battle. A reworked vampire skill-tree is being included for any players who are bitten.

SKYBOUND EXPANSION

While this Chapter promises to explore familiar landmarks – as well as Solitude and Blackreach the expansion will include Morthal, Labyrinthian, and Dragon Bridge – there's plenty you've never seen before in this rendition of Skyrim. The Elder Scrolls Online is set 900 years before The Elder Scrolls V: Skyrim, so the world is full of surprises for even the hardest of explorers. The supernatural overtones alone suggest this will be a more sinister take on the region than we're used to.

Over the course of the next year you'll be tasked with helping the



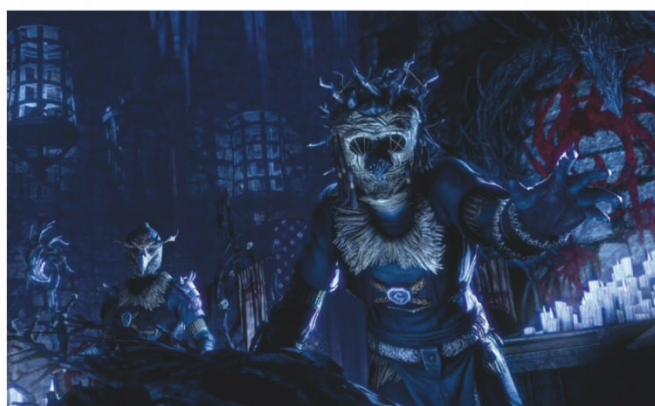
TEAM PLAYER

The beastly Vampire Lord is at the heart of Greymoor's narrative. Will you be able to fight through Darkreach and defeat the Chapter's head blocksucker?



The Big 10

STORIES EVERYONE'S TALKING ABOUT



■ Harrowstorm's dungeons will link to the introduction of Skyrim.

Online Studios is also committed to delivering more of the content you venture online for.

In addition to the year-long event, Greymoor will introduce another 12-player Trial, Kyne's Aegis, and an expansive set of dungeons, quests, delves, and world events to play through, quality-of-life updates, and all the other features you'd expect in an expansion to The Elder Scrolls Online universe.

With that said, it's also evident that the developer is holding something back for future Chapter releases. For example, the central region of Skyrim, which includes the popular city of Whiterun, doesn't feature in Greymoor.

The Elder Scrolls Online: Greymoor will launch on 2 June as a physical collector's edition, which will include a map, statue, four collectible coins, and a steelbook case. There will also be a digital collector's edition with preorder bonuses including pets, clothing styles, mounts, and emotes.

Even if we have qualms about carving up Skyrim for future DLC, Greymoor's packed with content. Plus, nostalgia and vampires go a long way to getting us back online.

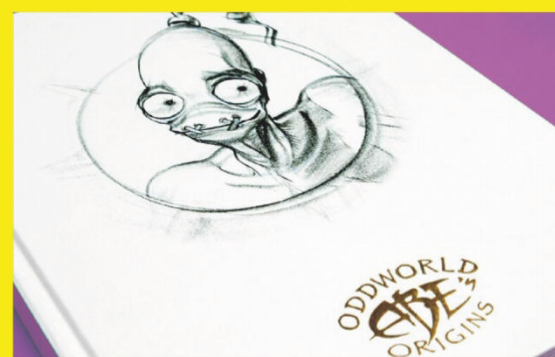
* Will you be heading back to Skyrim in June? Write in and let us know.



■ Darkreach is the sinister underbelly beneath Skyrim's snowy vistas.

info patches

update your brain



ABE'S RARE ODDITIES

As we await Oddworld: Soulstorm's PS4 release, the developer is tapping into its legacy. Out now is the art book Oddworld: Abe's Origins, which crams officially-licensed Oddworld Inhabitants concept art into its 288 pages. It also includes an interview with Abe creator Lorne Lanning.



DYING LIGHT 2 DELAYED

What a month for devs missing deadlines, eh? Dying Light 2 joins the list of Triple-A games moving from their spring release dates (see p10). While Techland's parkour zombie adventure has yet to get a firm new date, we do know a next-gen edition was being planned. Will it be on PS5's launch line-up?



FUNKO POPS 2077

The game may have been delayed until September but the Cyberpunk 2077 merchandise is in full swing. Funko revealed its male and female V Pops! figures, as well as Johnny Silverhand (modelled on Keanu Reeves), at this year's London Toy Fair. There's no date for the toys' release.

Nords investigate a series of supernatural events, called harrowstorms. These dark events have encouraged witches, vampires, and werewolves to emerge from below Solitude and threaten the bearded population of Skyrim.

A brand-new Chapter means extra mechanics for The Elder Scrolls Online. This DLC features an Antiquities system, which enables you to make more of the many ancient relics and treasures found hidden in the game's huge open world. By studying these valuable items you're able to uncover the hidden history of Tamriel, and maybe glimpse its future.

GREY SCALE

We've no doubt that Greymoor will be a mammoth undertaking. This story Chapter alone promises over 30 hours of action, but Zenimax

Join in The Outlast Trials

It's a trial run. No, seriously – *run!*

07

The Murkoff Corporation created some pants-ruining scares for us in the first two

Outlast games, but it turns out it was making life stressful for test subjects as far long ago as the Cold War. The Outlast Trials is more of a side-project than a third game in the series, and allows for solo scares or four-player thrills.

Why the Cold War setting? "It was more the idea of doing a prequel," says Philippe Morin, Red Barrels' co-founder. "We've tried to create a backstory that deepens the mythology of the games. We wanted to dive into that backstory, at the height of the MKUltra program. Then the Cold War became an opportunity to construct a game based on paranoia."

TRIAL AND TERROR

Creating a multiplayer mode was a new challenge for the team, but they wanted to make sure solo play was still possible. "We basically

came up with a concept that is flexible, so people can play it any way they want." The fact that others can join in doesn't mean the scares will be any less intense. "Obviously, the experience is not exactly the same but it's satisfying in different ways," says Morin. "The thing is, even when you'll be playing a game of four players, you won't be a tight group all the time. Stuff will happen, sh*t will hit the fan and soon you may find yourself separated from the group..." Morin leaves it up to our imagination, but the feeling of separation could make the frights even worse.

The Outlast Trials is still in early production, but if there's one thing we can count on Red Barrels for it is, appropriately, a keg of unimaginable gore. Whatever happens, don't leave us alone, yeah?

★ What frights do you expect from The Outlast Trials? Tell us: opm@futurenet.com.

“SH*T WILL HIT THE FAN AND SOON YOU MAY FIND YOURSELF SEPARATED FROM THE GROUP.”

You wouldn't leave a friend hanging just to save your own life... would you?



BIG LEAGUES

So far we've only seen content from the U-17 World Championships, but later story arcs in the source material follow Tsubasa as he plays for the likes of São Paulo and Barcelona.

PlayStation voices

the month in
mouthing off

"None of these delays are really surprising. Gotta put out a date out there to motivate a bit [...] but games are so complicated, always doing new stuff, that it's so tough to predict." Remedy's **Thomas Puha** tells it how it is.



019

"A zany sense of humor is very important in life." **Hideki Naganuma** hands out some life advice.

"I'm working on a title as a core member. I hope the title won't be cancelled." **Masahiro Ito** has something in the works.



Special effects mark some of the over-the-top moves you won't see in real life.

The beautiful sport comes home

Captain Tsubasa helps footie games get a bit baller

08

Finally there's a football game for anime fans – though, playing like an over-the-top anime version of

PS2's cult hit Red Card, Captain Tsubasa: Rise Of New Champions should also be in the lineup for football-loving gamers looking for a fresh twist on the sport.

Based on the popular Captain Tsubasa manga and anime from the

1980s, this translates the stories' human drama and hyperbolic action into game form, with a plot that promises to hit beats from the source material.

From our hands-on, the action will be familiar to anyone who has played football games before. You've got the classics – to pass, to lob-pass, to through-ball. But the difference is you can use energy to pull off special moves, from holding down as far as possible to do a bullet shot so strong that it might knock a goalkeeper back, or a super dribble that sends you dashing automatically past defenders. Fouls don't seem to exist, so slide tackles ahoy (though you can be offside). As well as the story, there will be offline and online versus modes. This is one wild football adventure you won't want to miss out on.



■ Anime visuals aside, this plays like PS2's classic arcade football game Red Card.

★ Captain Tsubasa enters the PS4 big leagues sometime in 2020.



instant opinion

strong vs wrong

HEY, BIG SELLER

PS4 is now the second-best-selling home console of all time. It comes behind PS2 and ahead of PS1, meaning Sony has the three best-selling home systems in history.

MERI-GOLDEN SHOW

The Witcher TV series was Netflix's most-watched show in 2019 so naturally a new series is already filming, and there's an animated show in the works.

DREAM ON

Saddened by the Cyberpunk 2077 delay? Then pick up Dreams on 14 Feb and play Detricklez's remake of CD Projekt Red's game in the game-creator.

STAMP OF HONOUR

We caught the nostalgia bug when we saw the Royal Mail's new classic game-themed stamps, partly because WipEout made it into the collection, and also it reminded us physical letters still exist.

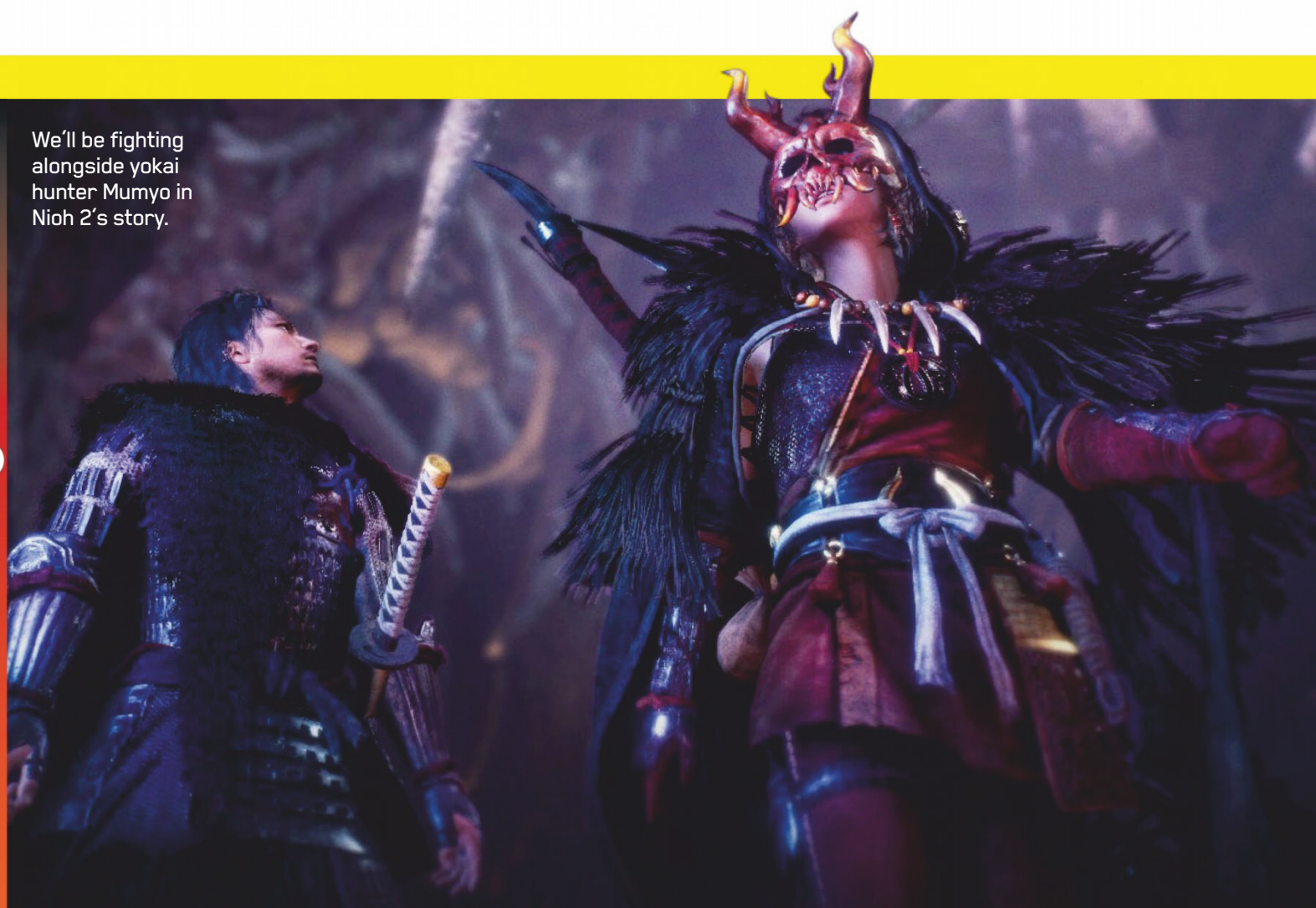
IRON MAN MELTS

PS VR exclusive Iron Man VR has joined the growing list of games being delayed. We're trying to stay positive.

SHOW NO GO

Sony has confirmed it will miss E3 this year. The show is never the same without Sony, but at least we can expect countless PS5 game reveals from third-party publishers.

We'll be fighting alongside yokai hunter Mumyo in Nioh 2's story.



Nioh 2 plans ahead with DLC content

New story details of Sony's soulsborne emerge

09

We haven't even begun trying to track down the powerful spirit stones of 1555 Japan, necessary

to keep our immense yokai (demonic) powers under control, yet Koei Tecmo has disclosed that three post-release DLC expansions will develop the tale further.

In Nioh 2 you take on the role of yokai hunter Hideyoshi to locate these sacred stones before the land's demons and ghouls can get to them. As they're used both to control your own yokai abilities and also to communicate with

the yokai, they're incredibly valuable. During your adventure you will partner with a wandering merchant, Toukichiro, fight alongside a skilled yokai hunter named Mumyo, and eventually align yourself with the warlord Oda Nobunaga.

The story of Nioh 2 will be expanded upon in the DLC, "with each [instalment] focusing on a different storyline that predates the events of Nioh 2, promising hours of additional gameplay that will provide plenty of challenge for those

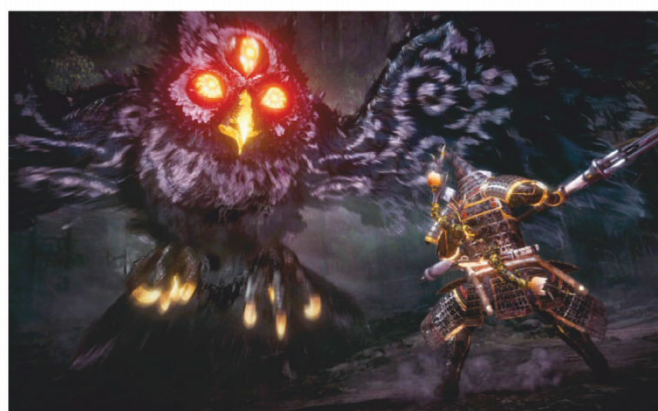
thirsting for more," according to Team Ninja's creative director, Tom Lee, on the PlayStation Blog.

In a similar vein to the original Nioh

this DLC will include new characters, combat abilities, and weapons, plus original missions and side-quests.

The DLC will form the game's season pass, and you can also get this extra content with the Digital Deluxe Edition, which comes with exclusive in-game items such as the Demon Horde armour set and Kodama netsuke charm.

PLENTY OF CHALLENGE FOR THOSE THIRSTING FOR MORE.



Love Bloodborne and Sekiro? Then Team Ninja's Nioh 2 is a must-play.

* The PS4 exclusive is published by Sony in the UK. It will release on 13 March.

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The Big 10

STORIES EVERYONE'S TALKING ABOUT



YOU BAT-TEASE

Recent teases out of WB Games Montreal suggest a Court Of Owls game – and by the time you read this there'll probably be more. Visit wbgamesmontreal.com/redacted to catch up on the reveals.

10

just one more question...
the team debate this month's burning issue

What can we expect from the new Batman game?



IAN DEAN
EDITOR



LET'S PLAY AS BRUCE WAYNE TOO, GETTING BATMAN'S WORK-LIFE BALANCE IN HARMONY.

I never thought I'd say this, but the new Arkham game should take inspiration from Batman Forever (please forgive me). Pinching an idea from Marvel's Spider-Man (and Origins' DLC) this new Arkham could see you playing as Bruce Wayne as well as Bats. Spending time in the playboy's suits, you'll need to keep the Wayne empire running while being careful not to give away your alter-ego in the same way as Val Kilmer's Wayne dodged a question or two from Nicole Kidman's Dr Chase Meridian. Seeing the other side of Batman could also usher in daytime city missions. ■



JESS KINGHORN
STAFF WRITER



MY SUGGESTION: LET'S GET SILLY WITH BATMAN AND DRAG SOME HUMOUR INTO THE SERIES.

I'm not knocking everything that came before. I'm also not knocking the Nolanverse or the '90s cartoon – I just wouldn't mind a trip off the well-beaten, brooding path. It's a direction that WB Games Montreal certainly won't give a hoot about but just picture this: Batman: Arkham Smooches. Here's the pitch: a dating sim starring Gotham's rogues gallery where almost every ending is a bad one, but at least you'd know it was *definitely* them and not you. All of which silliness is to say that I certainly wouldn't mind a return to over-the-top hijinks for stoic old Bats. ■



OSCAR TAYLOR-KENT
GAMES EDITOR



ARKHAM ORIGINS SHOULD FINALLY GET THE SEQUEL IT DESERVES.

We know the next Bat-project will be developed by Warner Games Montreal, which also made the woefully underrated Batman: Arkham Origins. It was a tense Christmas adventure centred on a Batman two years into operating (with younger voice actors to match), pursued by a group of assassins and the police. Batman voice actor Kevin Conroy seems to not be involved with the new game, so it would make sense if this was a follow-up to Origins, with that same younger Batman. And if the Court Of Owls is involved, we can expect the whole city to have a talon-shaped target on the bat's back. ■



MILFORD COPPOCK
MANAGING ART EDITOR



LET'S ACTUALLY GET TO BE THE GOTHAM KNIGHT, PROTECTING THE WHOLE CITY, NEXT TIME.

Bigger might not always be better, but it feels like over the course of this and the last generation the scope of Batman games hasn't increased by much. Batman is Gotham's Knight, yet somehow he's always restricted to a district here or a few islands there. If the new Batman ends up being a PS5 game, surely we can expect a city that feels like Gotham, not a handful of empty streets. With a grappling hook, Batman should be able to navigate a large space without much hassle, with the minimum of boring loading screens thanks to the new console's blisteringly fast SSD. ■



GAME DRIVE

To save the world,
you have to save
your game!

Officially licensed add-on storage
for PlayStation®4-systems



Discover the Seagate
Game Drive for PlayStation® at



REPLIES

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#171 We were ready to take on one of the year's Biggest Bads.

Gun away

Thank you for James McMahon's article, Giving Up The Gun, in OPM 171. He's summed up perfectly how I feel from time to time, that playing a game without a gun is a grand and necessary thing to do. I loved Journey, though I failed to finish Unfinished Swan, and maybe I never will.

I don't want to ban games with guns (if I'm honest, I'm really not very good at the FPS, Dishonored I'm looking at you), but I think it's no bad thing to step away from the games you normally play to try something completely different. The guns will always be

there but sometimes you just need that calm quiet moment before you return to the fray.

Pippa Baddeley via email

We agree! Gaming's more fun if you play a wide variety of types.

One winner

I would like to express my concern in regards to a comment made in issue 170 on page 97 of the Official PlayStation Magazine. This article

DEATH STRANDING WAS THE EXPRESSION OF AN IDEA, AND THIS DOESN'T HAPPEN OFTEN ENOUGH.

Star letter But is it art?

The dividing line between movies and music on the one hand, and videogames on the other, is difficult to grasp. Quite obviously they all constitute art but as James McMahon rightly suggested in your January issue the notion of 'legacy' is a point of distinction. The 'legacy' that games leave is practical; the ubiquity of waist-high cover in the wake of Uncharted and Gears Of War, automatic health regeneration etc. The drive towards immense financial profit that is synonymous with modern videogames does not leave enough room for artistic expression. There is art that springs freely from the

imagination of a creator, art created by mavericks, and then art dominated by the overweening drive to profit. Death Stranding fits into the former category. Death Stranding was the expression of an idea, and this doesn't happen often enough. Without developers like Kojima, without mavericks that are able to fund their ideas and turn them into unique and compelling works the videogames industry will never truly 'grow up' in any meaningful sense.

Jonathan Bowden via email

We'd argue it doesn't take a lone maverick to create art, but prioritising creativity is definitely essential for it.

is in regards to Death Stranding. Oscar Taylor-Kent started the article by saying: "You could play Death Stranding offline and alone, but your life would be as hollow as those of the isolationist preppers."

Now I am not one for being insulted easily however I do feel offended by this comment. It makes me think that the writer believes that everyone who happens to play PlayStation games 'offline' or 'alone' is somehow sad and is a demeaning comment in general.

Lee Garvey via email

Oscar was referring to the player's life within the game, not life in general - Death Stranding is one title that needs to be played with others to be experienced at its best. All the members of Team OPM play offline and alone, and Oscar himself loves visual novels. We love solo play!



CAN I GET A RT?

The most pleasing tweetings from the @OPM_UK timeline...



@PLAYPHOGS

It's time for a quick giveaway! Tweet us a picture of your Official Playstation Magazine and win a PHOGS! shirt.

WHOEVER DOES IT FIRST, GETS A SHIRT! READY, SET AND GO! *WOOF*

[I want a T-shirt! - ed]



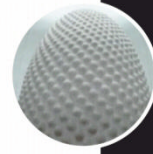
@BLOOMYBOY

Goat Simulator is surprisingly good fun.



@MATT2004HOOP

Soulstorm looks like it's gonna be another top notch addition to the series. Looking forward to this one!

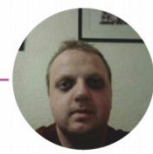


@RAWDATA

Hello, From time to time you include gifts with your magazine; I would like to suggest 'bookmarks' as an idea for a future gift.

[But people keep telling us that print is dead - ed]

TROLL OF THE MONTH



@BYRONB1986

Every PS5 comes with a copy of Knack 3



@REYIELL

Btw..... can we get some Sephiroth goodies in a next issue? He is my favourite of that game, he deserves some love



@MMMJAY82

Jan 2020 issue was a great read, thanks for delivering again guys. Loving the coverage of Streets Of Rage 4 - certainly a game I have waited most of my life for. So thanks again.

"I don't want to think when playing Doom. Just switch off and turn everything into paste as I strafe around."

SOUNDS GREAT, DAVE LANE - FLIP TO P32 FOR MORE ON DOOM ETERNAL



"Heading back to Arkham Asylum and City! Gotta beat that old score."

GOOD LUCK, MURAKUMO ZETSU

READERS' MOST WANTED

Which games are bleeping loudest on your radar?

1

Ghost Of Tsushima

Sneaking into top place on your Most Wanted list, it's Jin. For now, turn to p48 and find out why he deserves the no. 1 spot.

FORMAT PS4
ETA TBC

2

The Last Of Us Part II

Since it was announced, this has been one of your Most Wanted games. There's not long to wait now...

FORMAT PS4
ETA 29 MAY

3

Cyberpunk 2077

It's slipped and rumours of developer crunch are sadly circling. Here's hoping this lives up to the high expectations.

FORMAT PS4
ETA 17 SEP

5

Resident Evil 3

Looking so packed it's more of a Scooby Snack than a Jill Sandwich, Resi 3 is rapidly shuffling our way.

FORMAT PS4
ETA 3 APR

VOTE NOW!

Tell us the five games you can't wait to play at opm@futurenet.com

4

Final Fantasy VII Remake

We now know we'll land in Midgar on 10 April. Are you ready to take Cloud on an even bigger adventure?

FORMAT PS4
ETA 10 APR

?

EXIT POLL

Our Facebook fans answer a final question

What's your favourite PlayStation game featuring samurai?

21% wielded Bushido Blade.

18% stepped out of the shadows to say Sekiro.

16% know it's destined to be Onimusha 2.

23%

sneaked in with Tenchu: Stealth Assassin.

7% said Final Fantasy XIV - well, it is a job class.

15% love the small-is-beautiful Mini Ninjas.

NEXT MONTH

Who's your favourite Guilty Gear character?

Mia Honey

LOOKING TO INCREASE THE LONGEVITY OF GAMES? SPEEDRUNNING CAN MAKE YOUR FAVOURITES PRACTICALLY IMMORTAL.

Going faster doesn't mean it's over for good more quickly

When I was around 16 my favourite game got shelved for good, put into retirement. Long before the day of trophies, my PlayStation 2 favourite, *Resident Evil: Code Veronica X*, had driven my entire family to insanity, to the point they could recite some of the script off the tops of their heads. Five years later I dusted it off and brought it back to life.

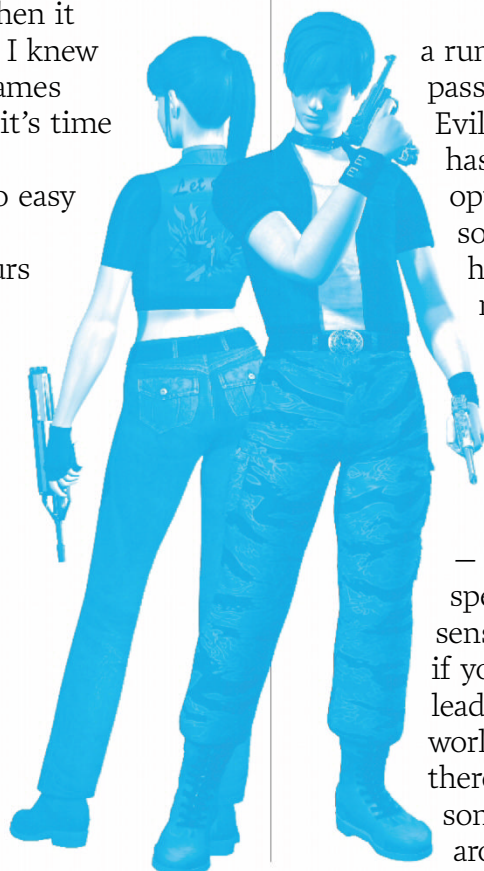
I didn't realise there were thousands of people who, like me, loved a game way too much to let it go, not until the day I found Games Done Quick, a charity marathon of speedrunners finishing games they knew inside-out as fast as possible to make money for charity. And that's when it happened; like magic I knew it was time for my games revival — and maybe it's time for yours too.

Speedrunning is no easy feat. Learning enemy patterns can take hours or even weeks, depending on the game. You need to remember who takes a left lunge here or a step forward there, and on top of it almost every single game has an element of RNG (Random Number Generator), a term often used in speedrunning to describe unpredictable factors within



WRITER BIO

As a survival horror veteran of over 15 years, Mia Honey is more than up for the challenge of speed and taking older horror games to a new level... just maybe not the challenge of taking on big bosses with only a handgun. Hey, it's called speedrunning, not speeddying.



a run, such as randomised passcodes (take *Resident Evil 3*, where every passcode has at least three or four options to choose from, something I'm really hoping will feature in the remake that's arriving in April). Re-learning all of this about a game you loved stretches its limits and pushes your time with it as much as humanly possible — that's why I say speedrunning offers a sense of immortality. Even if you were to top the leaderboards and set a world-record-winning time, there's almost always someone who can come around and beat it, giving

you the opportunity to learn all over again.

There's even an extra element introduced by this entirely player-driven community: challenge runs. As if getting from A to B weren't a complex enough process as it is, some speedrun challenges make things extra-difficult. Take, for example, *Resident Evil 2*'s remake. That game has so many different options speedrunners had to offer a category extension section, which includes hardcore Knife-Only speedruns (play the game on the hardest difficulty, only using a knife — yes, that's boss battles included), Handgun-Only runs, and the option for players who honour the storyline too to complete a True Ending speedrun. Many game series offer a similar choice of run types, and really allow you to extend your love for your game in whatever way you think is best.

GOTTA GO FAST!

Like any concept that crops up in videogames, speedrunning is not exempt from dissenters — some people claim pushing through games as quickly as possible spoils the fun, or limits the amount of time people are able to spend with content, skipping storyline or additional content such as files or collectibles. But I offer you a different view: find the collectibles, learn to love the storyline, and when you know you've found a good (maybe lifelong) favourite game and you don't know what other direction to take it in, try to battle it out with the best of them. The challenge of speedrunning is a lot more fun than you might think.



Jess Kinghorn

IT'S ALL OVER THE MAP! SURELY THERE'S A BETTER WAY TO FIND YOUR WAY.

Games should plot a different course when it comes to the navigational tools they give you

That faint whistle made by whatever you've scooped up in your telekinetic grasp, the peculiarly particular workplace posters, the nightmare fuel that is the Threshold Kids – there are so many great details in *Control* that when you happen across an element not up to the same level, it sticks out like a spent psychic's nosebleed. In this stretched metaphor, *Control*'s nosebleed is its map.

On top of making the game hang whenever you pull it up, elevation is poorly communicated and there's almost no indication of which areas you've fully explored. In a game with *Metroidvania*-esque progression, that's something any budding Parautilitarian will feel the lack of, and it was one reason why OPM's editor took his leave of *The Oldest House*.

THERE AND BACK

Of course, *Control*'s is only the latest in a slew of terrible in-game maps or navigation tools in otherwise great titles, and I'm wondering why getting around a virtual world is often such a headache. Despite the Ghibli-esque

charm of *Raincatcher Gully* or the gpose-friendly scenes throughout *The First*, my eye stays glued to *FFXIV*'s bottom corner. Surrounded by the acidic tones of *Monarch*'s megafauna, I'm staring at the bright green waypoint marker and not bothering to sniff the *Outer Worlds*' (potentially carnivorous) roses. I've all of *Skyrim* to explore and only care about barrelling towards the next objective on my checklist! Why is it that so many games' maps and navigation systems work against fostering player interest in their worlds?

Naturally not every game can follow in FromSoftware's footsteps and nix maps entirely yet still etch every corner of Yharnam into the inside of your skull thanks to choice enemy placement and a carefully crafted sense of place. *Control* has a similarly killer setting with plenty of secrets, but its map's unwieldiness discourages over-reliance, forcing you to get to know the mercurial halls of the Oldest House and me to ponder "Is it a bug or is it a feature?" But I'm also wondering what other roads might acquaint me with some fantastic worlds in the future.

WRITER BIO

If Jess Kinghorn were a pigeon, she'd helplessly flap around in circles before pulling out Google Maps. Still, by now she knows the Oldest House and Yharnam better than Bath, or even the back of her own hand.



Oscar Taylor-Kent

STRONG ART DIRECTION WILL BE THE KEY TO UNLOCKING THE TRUE POWER OF THE NEXT GEN.

Looking at the past, the cases for realism haven't aged completely gracefully

As often happens, one of our recent exclusive interviews made the rounds online after we broke the news. The man interviewed? Flavourworks' Jack Attridge. The comment? That PS4 has some of the best-looking games in the world right now, which is "down to art direction, not power". And he's right.

I recently moved house, which went about as well as the removals in *Team 17*'s upcoming *Moving Out*, all chaos and mad packing (though thankfully nothing got flung out of windows). This left me for at least a week with no PS4 hooked up to my TV, and only my old faithful PS3. It felt like an opportunity. Thanks to a big HDD I had plenty still downloaded to flick through. The games that invested in strong and unique art directions aged better than those that chased realism.

The big releases of the day that pushed graphical realism looked a bit rubbish in the cold light of 2020. They were still enjoyable, once I looked past all the brown and jaggy textures, but took more of an effort to get into. Others,

though, like PS3's *Jet Set Radio HD* port, and the original release of *Ni No Kuni*, still managed to look stunning. While obviously not graphical powerhouses, they don't just work around that fact, but work off of it too, lower-res textures becoming building blocks on a wider canvas.

STYLE FIVE

It has me wondering what games will look like in future, especially with PS5 on the horizon. It might be a lot more powerful than PS4, but we're going to be getting diminishing returns on graphical realism in future. But I think Jack Attridge is right. A lot of devs creating games for PS4 are already leaning into this to create incredible-looking worlds. While the likes of *God Of War* or *Marvel's Spider-Man* might take a lot of cues from realism, they're also uniquely, beautifully stylised, whether you're talking to a giant snake or twirling gracefully in the air above a shiny skyscraper. PS5 will bring more of this, strong art direction combined with the fidelity of realism – we'll have truly stylised worlds to get lost in.

WRITER BIO

Oscar Taylor-Kent even brings this concept into real life, strutting his stuff in OPM Towers with bright purple Spyro shirts and electric blue anime film duds, blinding the team. "That's just the power of a strong art direction," he says.

TEMPLES

IN
THE
MOOD
FOR...

Temples

Saying our prayers in PlayStation's most spiritual sanctuaries

1 RISE OF THE TOMB RAIDER

Before she risks hypothermia in Siberia, Lara ventures to Syria in search of the Prophet Of Constantinople's tomb. In the least surprising turn of events since Titanic was sunk by a gigantic ice cube, Crofty leaves it empty-handed. Ah well, at least the sodden temple looks extra purdy.

2 LITTEBIGPLANET

The Dancers' Court is the first level of LBP's Temples story section. After Sackboy descends into the court via a magic floating cloud, silliness ensues. Buy a tabby who likes to chuck around fire! Bounce on a shopkeeper's head! Run under a flaming snake! For a flammable fellow, our little sack chum has a real thing for arson.

3 UNCHARTED 2: AMONG THIEVES

Nate loves a temple. One of the finest examples of the series' love for sacred structures is in the chapter 'The City's Secret' in Uncharted 2. On the trail of the city of Shambala, Drake and Chloe are led to a waterlogged temple housing a huge statue that leads to death-defying platforming.

4 FINAL FANTASY X-2

Final Fantasies and temples go together like deep-fried pizza and clogged arteries. In FFX2, Yuna, Rikku, and Paine explore the dangerous Djose Temple after the Machine Faction has moved into the structure. Normally concealed beneath rock, the entrance reveals itself if a summoner casts some magic juju on it.

5 GUACAMELEE 2!

This punchy luchador platformer has *all* the temples. Our fave? That'll be Templo De La Serpiente. Talk about doing what it says on the tin. When not battling Void Skeletons in a series of battle rooms, Juan has to cheese it in seriously speedy style to avoid the murderous advances of a giant serpent.

6 ASSASSIN'S CREED IV: BLACK FLAG

The settlement of Tulum is home to a Mayan temple that taxes Edward's noodle. Following James Kidd through an underground labyrinth, a series of mechanism puzzles look to befuddle the Assassin. This being a temple, stinking great statues are par for the course, with one sage head that's a dead ringer for X-Men's Apocalypse.

7 THE ELDER SCROLLS V: SKYRIM

Unless you want to come down with a case of extreme Skyrim sniffles, we'd suggest staying away from the Temple Of Miraak. This frosty sanctuary is located in Solstheim and was the site of a major battle during the Dragon War. The bones of said beasts can be seen near the temple's entrance.

8 HORIZON ZERO DAWN

All-Mother Mountain is a holy temple retrofitted as a reinforced bunker. In a world crammed with robotic beasties, a little temple time requires the sturdiest of doors. If only Aloy and the rest of the Matriarchs knew the bunker's 'deity' was actually a long-dormant computer program. Silly Aloy.

9 X-MEN ORIGINS: WOLVERINE

Praying gets swapped for pummelling as Logan visits Angolan temples in the first level of this violent tie-in. As Wolvey isn't exactly the religious type, what could have been a spiritual retreat turns into a viscera-soaked massacre, with Logan and his Team X allies killing *all* the dudes while searching for an adamantium mine.

HONOURABLE MENTIONS

Brütal Legend

We'd have included this virtual rocker's Temple Of The Zaulia, but Jack Black, who voices Riggs, really grinds our gears.

Star Wars Jedi: Fallen Order

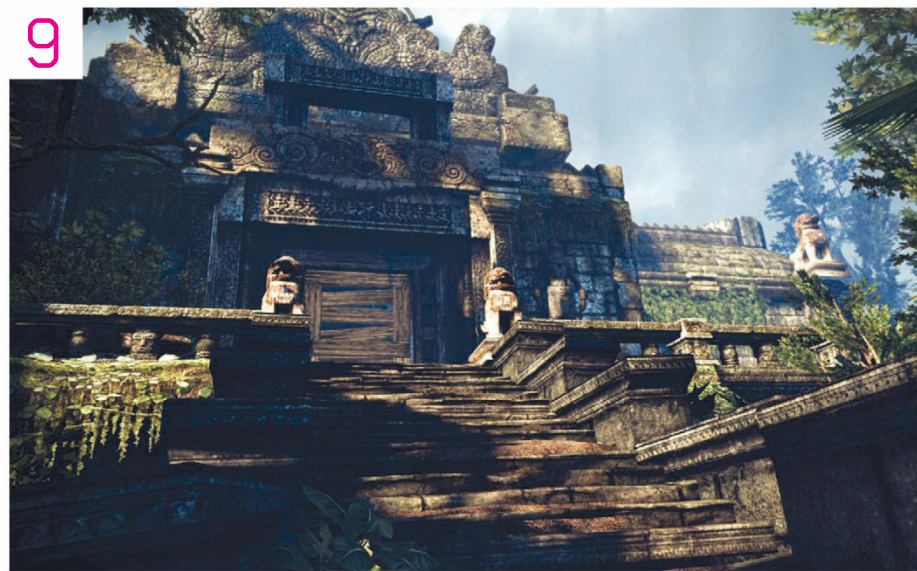
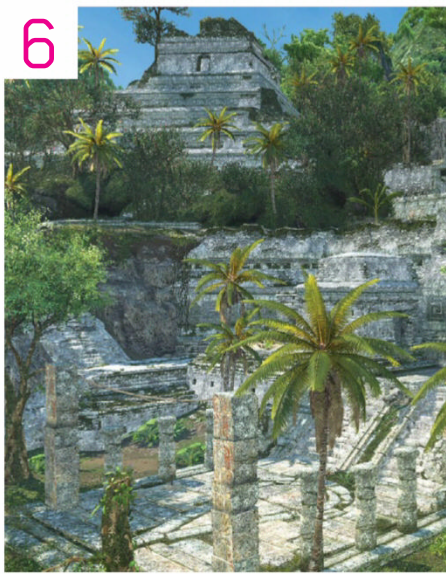
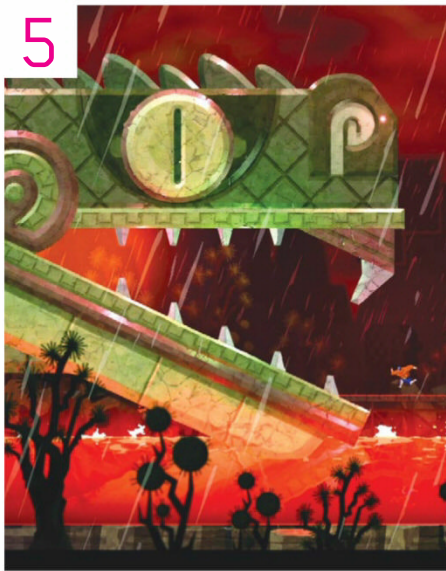
Squint and this could be Tomb Raider in space. We loved Dathomir's Zeffonian ruins.

Dragon Age: Inquisition

Pride cometh before a... you know the rest. The elven Temple Of Pride was sealed inside an oasis.

Did we miss your favourite temple? Got a brilliant In The Mood For idea? Show and tell at twitter.com/opm_uk.







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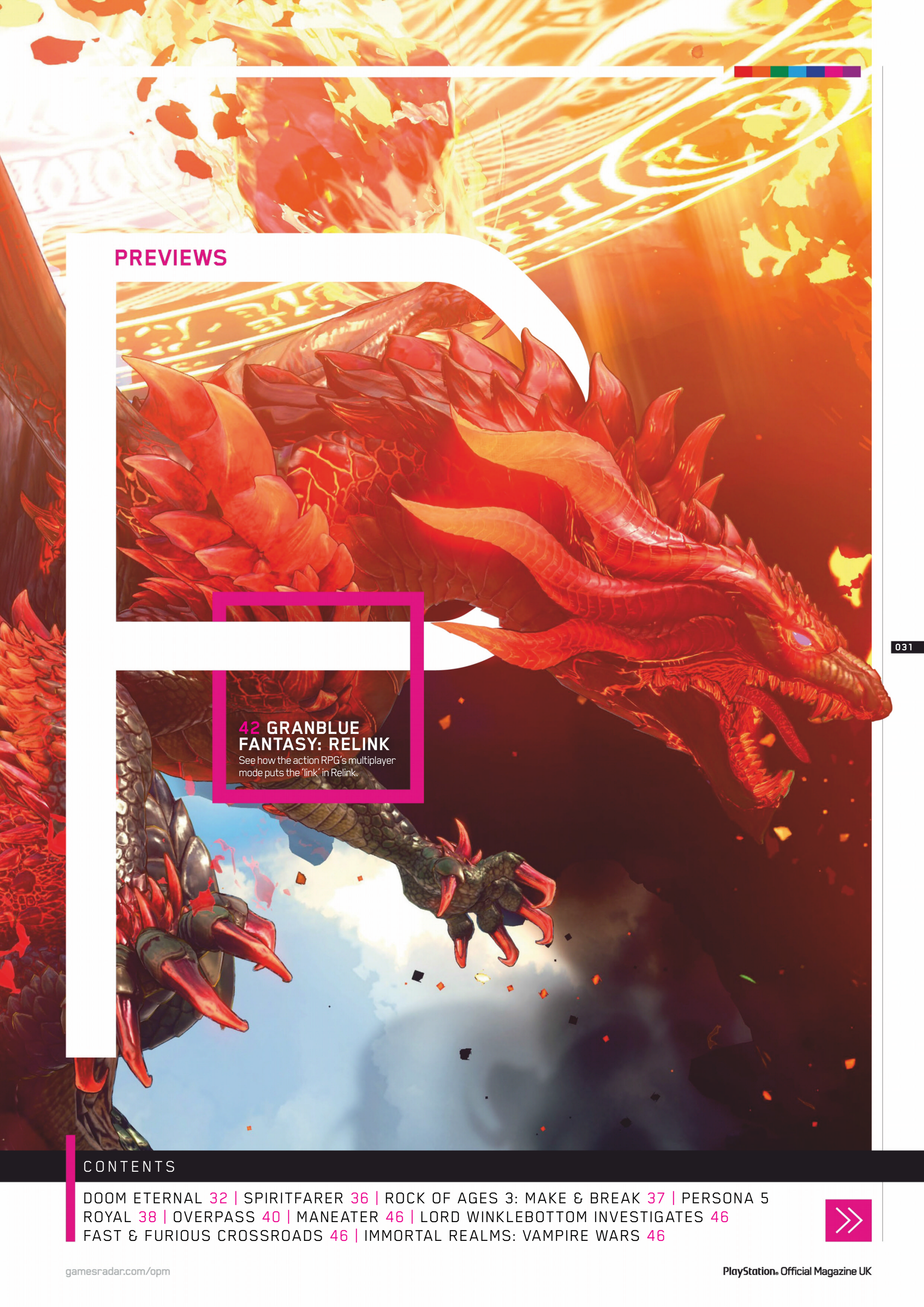


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PREVIEWS

42 GRANBLUE FANTASY: RELINK

See how the action RPG's multiplayer mode puts the 'link' in Relink.

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PREVIEW

At heart this is still the Doom you love, but with a revised approach to level design Eternal is also a big step forward.



“THE FIRST THING YOU NOTICE IS HOW MUCH MORE VARIED THE LEVELS ARE.”

F FORMAT PS4 / **ETA** 20 MAR
PUB BETHESDA SOFTWORKS / **DEV** ID SOFTWARE

DOOM ETERNAL

We discover that three hours in Hell feel like three minutes in Heaven



The first thing you notice about Doom's fiery new Hell on Earth is how much more varied the levels are, and how much bigger. The first level has you fighting your way off a creaking wooden Hell barge crammed with lost souls, before jumping off it into the middle of a city crumbling under siege.

Blasting your way through hordes of hellbeasts still tearing Earth apart, dodging past a skyscraper-sized horned demon, and hopping over the ruins of mechs that have fallen trying to protect the city, you (as the ubiquitous Doom Slayer) make your way to a citadel. Within is a Hell Priest, one of three who are using their power to aid the demonic invasion. Once you've dispatched him, you must set off to track down those remaining and stop the forces of Hell. That's all in the first level of the game.

HELL YEAH

The biggest mistake you could make is thinking that Doom Eternal is just more of the same. Far from it. It's slicker than ever thanks to Id's next-gen IdTech7 engine, and the environments only continue to evolve in ever more surprising ways in the opening hours. In our hands-on we leap around the ruined battlements of the Asgard-like Night Sentinel homeland, battle through a hellish domain, and invade a Hell-cult base atop snowy mountains on Earth. In between we chill out in our Fortress Of Doom, where we can unlock upgrades such as ice

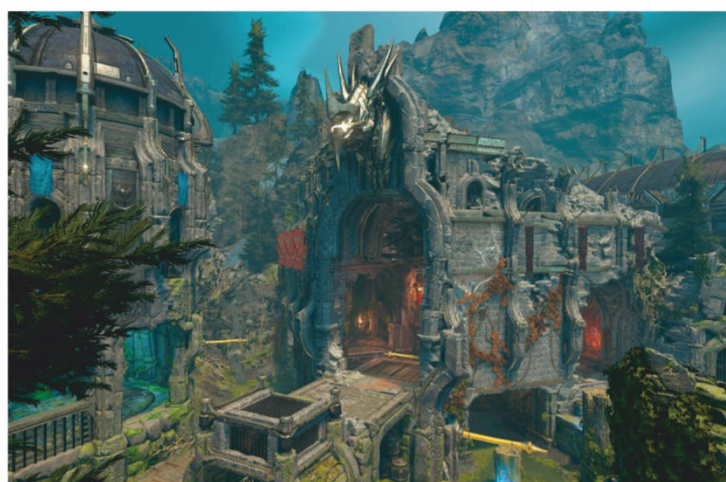


PREVIEW



Left The chilly cultist base located in Earth's north provides a snowy backdrop for some slaying...

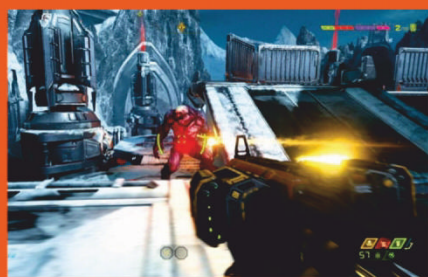
Right ...and the Night Sentinels' planet hides many secrets too. The Doomiverse just got a lot bigger.



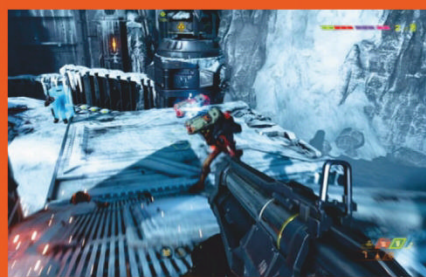
Dodging bullets while navigating through lasers. Pure shooting isn't the only challenge on offer.

MOD-ern warfare

Just point and shoot with **L2** to utilise the many gun mods on offer...



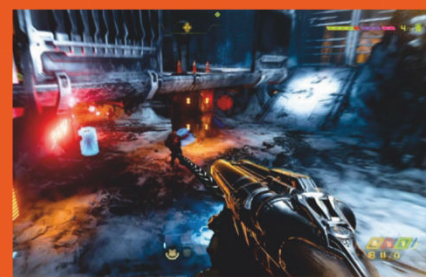
1 The heavy cannon's micro-missiles are heat-seeking and fast-launching – just the thing you need to crumble as many demon skulls as possible.



2 The combat shotgun's sticky bombs are perfect for destroying heavy demons' destructible parts, and making steaming piles of demon flesh.



3 What's better than one rocket? Three, naturally. The rocket launcher's lock-on burst mod allows you to target a barrage directly at an enemy.



4 The super shotgun's meat hook allows you to zip around an arena by digging a chain directly into a poor deemy's skin and yanking yourself straight to it.



Above Target specific body parts to limit demons' attack options, and glory kill them when they're staggered. It's an immensely satisfying process.

"WHEN YOU DIE, YOU SHOULD FEEL LIKE YOU KNOW WHAT YOU DID WRONG, THAT YOU MESSED UP."



Above Hell wouldn't be complete without vinyl nerds hoarding their discs. Even the Doom Slayer is a bit of a collector.



Above The ghostly Night Sentinels guide you on your journey. But is there more to King Novik, their leader, than there seems?

»

bombs, fight waves of baddies in the Prison Of Doom, and replay missions.

"We feel like the visual pacing in this game is much stronger," says creative director Hugo Martin, when we ask about the way each level evolves. "The levels sort of have three-act visual structures, where you begin in one place, you go somewhere, and you end in another." That's reflected in the fast-travel system that activates near the end of each level, enabling you to hop back to areas you've passed so you can mop up missed secrets or optional fights.

"Not all of them have three acts – I would say some of them have two acts – but over the course of each level [it changes]," says Martin. "While we have secrets and the levels certainly at times are mazy, it is a linear campaign experience, unlike an open-world experience. And so we really wanted to take advantage of what a linear campaign can give the player, which is a well-paced, controlled experience, where we control where we want to take you and what we want you to see." The levels might be larger, taking longer to beat than their 2016 counterparts, but it always feels like Doom Eternal is showing you something different.

Aiding this is a very calculated move away from being what could be branded a 'corridor shooter'.

"The arena spaces are the tried-and-true part of Doom," says Marty Stratton, the executive producer. "But the kind of the in-between ancillary spaces between the arenas have really got a major push in a number of ways. And you felt some of that in, in like, the kind of heroic jumping-between-meteor sections and climbing up walls, some of the hazards that are there."

FACTRICK

1. POSSESSION LAW

Special sections have the Doom Slayer controlling a demon, which is also how the 2v1 multiplayer works.

2. REVVING UP

Doom Eternal is the first game to use the IdTech7 engine, which sets up the studio for future releases.

3. LORE KEEPERS

From Heaven and Hell to the Night Sentinels, Eternal is packed with canon Doom lore and has a chunky codex.

FEELING JUMPY

The jumping and climbing might initially be controversial as in practice it's enabled the devs to add what are essentially more platforming sections to Doom. There are platforms hovering above lava, special walls you can clamber up by tapping **R3**, and buttons that open timer gates you have

to jump through. But these make the large levels feel more like real, twisting spaces and break up the frantic action with traversal puzzles that legitimately require some thought.

When this fast-paced platforming meets the fast-paced shooting arenas things get really special: arenas have monkey bars you can swing from to reach much-needed armour or gaps you can *just about* air-dash through to ambush a staggered demon. "The AI will challenge you, but the level design of Doom Eternal will challenge you just as much," says Martin. "Oftentimes we combine those two challenges where you're dealing with the combat and what the level is presenting you at the same time."

It might get tough – the legions of demons had us committing many sins with our lips at times – but never without cause. "When you die, you should feel like you know what you did wrong, that you messed up, it wasn't the game that screwed you over," says Martin. "[If] I know that it's something that I did wrong, that motivates me to want to play again because I feel like I haven't mastered the systems yet. So once you master them that's the real joy of the game because you feel like then you can totally dominate the experience."

Fine, pass the controller back. Turn up the heat. ■



Stella's guests will often ask to walk down memory lane to find something they lost.

FORMAT PS4 / **ETA** TBC / **PUB** THUNDER LOTUS GAMES / **DEV** THUNDER LOTUS GAMES

SPIRITFARER

Don't miss the boat on this one



The newest guest on Stella's houseboat for the dead is a giant snake coiled under a heavy cloak. Only recently departed, she's already hissing about making preparations for her trip to the afterlife. But ferry-girl Stella knows it's not the journey or even the destination that matter – it's the friends we make along the way. So what if hers are dead?

Summer the snake first requests her own onboard meditation space – one with plants and lots of light and even a hammock she can curl up in adorably. After a quick visit to the Shipyard, our sweet old snake lady soon feels right at home. Next on Summer's bucket list is a trip to the sleepy village of Hummingberg to take in the sights and search for a lost family heirloom.

SAVE OUR SOULS

Journeying between ports takes real-world time which you can spend tending to your garden, fishing, cooking, or even catching lightning for extra cash. Your other shipmates will have plenty of requests, but a good old-fashioned hug can also improve their mood. That said, it takes Gwen the deer a moment to reciprocate our first hug but she rejects a followup, telling us, "Please, Stella... A little bit of space would be appreciated." The road to friendship is not paved with a boatload of bear hugs, and helping your deceased menagerie find peace is going to take more work than min-maxing an affection meter.

That said, thanks to the exquisite character animation, every embrace is sure to leave you

with a case of the warm fuzzies. Small gestures, from how Summer sways in her baggy wrap-around to how the Raccoon salesman rubs his hands together in greeting, promise a thoroughly charming journey that's worth the trip.

But, alas, all too quickly our time with the demo comes to an end. Summer tells us she's ready to move on and her family heirloom, found after a bit of deft platforming on our part, guides the way through uncharted waters. As the final lantern is lit a strange winged creature looms into view. But that's just one tantalising mystery the demo offers. We can't wait to climb aboard the good ship Spiritfarer later this year and properly acquaint ourselves with dry-witted Gwen, chase storms with giant toad Atul, and get to know more of Stella's seafaring souls besides. ■



Above Atul loves a storm. After catching a few lightning bolts yourself you'll understand why.

on
the
box

judged only by
their covers



DISASTER REPORT 4: SUMMER MEMORIES

In this job simulator, you play as an intern who is definitely *not* being paid enough. Diligent and determined, she is going to give the commute from Hell 110% – and that's just the tutorial.

FORMAT PS4 **ETA** TBC



DREAMS

A game in which you must analyse characters' dreams gets dangerous when one of your clients is a murderer. Can you spot the patterns in dialogue choices and dream sequences to survive until your patients' cheques clear?

FORMAT PS4 **ETA** 14 FEB



NIOH 2

As an avatar of Capsicum, you start your adventure with a party of wimps who claim even mint is too 'spicy'. Only through your hot, hot! HOT! dishes can you level up their taste buds and drive back the evil of bland food.

FORMAT PS4 **ETA** 13 MAR

The yolks on you! There's a strange vein of humour in the game, if you can crack its puzzley shell.

"MANY OF THE MORE DISTINCTIVE BOULDERS HAVE SPECIAL SHAPES AND PROPERTIES."

i FORMAT PS4 / ETA TBC / PUB MODUS GAMES / DEV ACE TEAM

ROCK OF AGES 3: MAKE & BREAK

Take a roll on the weird side



Too few game devs are inspired by Monty Python, we reckon. Even fewer have the desire to include a giant egg in their games. "I think we should definitely have more games that feature Humpty Dumpty!" says Andres Bordeu, co-founder of Ace Team, and egg fanatic.

The big egg Bordeu is obsessing over is from Rock Of Ages 3's new Humpty Dumpty race mode. The series is famed for enabling you to control a number of goofy indestructible boulders, so you can crash gleefully through anything in your path. Humpty Dumpty mode spins this around: now you're vulnerable and need to roll your eggy hero out of harm's way across a series of trap-laden obstacle courses. It's egg-citing, if a little egg-centric.

EGG ROLL

That's not all, yolks: this sequel is bringing back the core story and competitive modes from the previous game. The Terry-Gilliam-style animations link together a story that covers various periods in history, including Ancient Greece and Medieval Europe. In each you play as a famous boulder (yes, really) and must career down a hill obliterating the

enemy forces. It's tower defence meets Super Monkey Ball, and it's lots of fun.

There's more to Rock Of Ages 3 than simply guiding a boulder into an enemy castle. There are also tactics and upgrades at play. Every boulder has unique stats – varying across categories such as speed, damage output, acceleration and mass – but many of the more distinctive boulders have special properties and shapes.

"The giant meatball gains mass and power as it absorbs damage, the cheese wheel is shaped like a cylinder and moves faster but is harder to manoeuvre, the angel boulder can jump in the air..." says Bordeu, adding: "Choosing your boulders can be essential for winning in certain game modes and map layouts."

The team are aiming to include 70 maps in the main story mode, three times more than featured in the previous game. But if you crash through those, a new map editor will enable you to create your own. ■



Above The story campaign features lots of inventive courses – and now you can build levels for yourself too.



FORMAT PS4 / **ETA** 31 MAR / **PUB** ATLUS / **DEV** P-STUDIO

PERSONA 5 ROYAL

You should see this JRPG in a crown



Bet you never saw this coming. Like Persona 3 FES and Persona 4 Golden before it, this is a massively expanded rerelease of a mainline Persona game with more characters, challenges and story elements added. That's all well and good but we're especially excited about one quality-of-life improvement in particular: you no longer have a strict bedtime enforced by your talking cat.

We jest, but only slightly – and Morgana still tells you to get an early night on important story days anyway. However, given what was already one of the biggest JRPGs on PS4 just got even bigger, you're going to need that extra time in the evenings. Those after-school hours are prime time for packing in socialising and getting to know your Confidants, and Royal not only beefs up existing social links, it also introduces a few fresh faces.

Front and centre of this updated version is Kasumi Yoshizawa, a gymnastic prodigy who initially starts at odds with the Phantom Thieves before eventually joining their cause. Representing the Faith arcana, you'll need to pay special attention to her; if you want to play Royal's brand-new 'third term,' which significantly extends the story past the point where the original game ends, you have to max out her Confidant rank before the middle of December during the in-game year.

THE GAME'S AFOOT

Another character you need to pay special attention to is an already-existing one whose storyline is having a significant overhaul for Royal: Goro Akechi. The floppy-haired ace detective's Confidant rank no longer progresses automatically, meaning you need to seek him out yourself to build your relationship over time. He's not the only pre-existing character the developers are having a second crack at, either: late-game party member Haru Okumura now has a greater presence in the story overall, and a number of boss encounters are being switched up.

That leads us to a second unfamiliar face in Royal: José, a young boy who appears only in Mementos. If you find a particular item in each palace and bring

it back to him, he can craft snazzy accessories that bestow boss abilities on your party.

This isn't the only buff you can enjoy in battle. With more powerful Shadows patrolling Palaces, you have an even better chance of downing enemies and instigating a Hold Up. On top of exploiting enemy weaknesses, Technical attacks (that is, whaling on an enemy inflicted with a status ailment) now results in a downed Shadow. Your navigator, Futaba, has her own All-Out Attack on top of all of the support abilities you can unlock by spending time with her in the real world. The rest of your fellow Phantom Thieves can also learn Showtime attacks that can be unleashed simultaneously.

ROYAL RUMBLE

The after-the-end story arc revises the original ending, not only offering fresh resolutions but a lot more besides. Naturally, we risk getting into spoiler territory if we go too deeply into the 'how' and 'why' of this additional scenario, but we can tell you it involves an all-new Palace with multiple never-before-battered bosses. We've already mentioned two of the three Confidants you need to reach max rank with for a shot at this new content; the third is bespectacled school counsellor Takuto Maruki. Making his debut shortly after the Phantom Thieves' first successful heist, he'll do much more than just listen to your problems...

We loved the vanilla version of Persona 5 (to the tune of giving it 10/10 back in issue 134) but the game being too short was definitely *not* one of our criticisms. All we're saying is it took our staff writer three years to finish the original release; who knows what world we'll be living in by the time she finishes Royal? ■

FACTRICK

1. SPLIT PERSONA

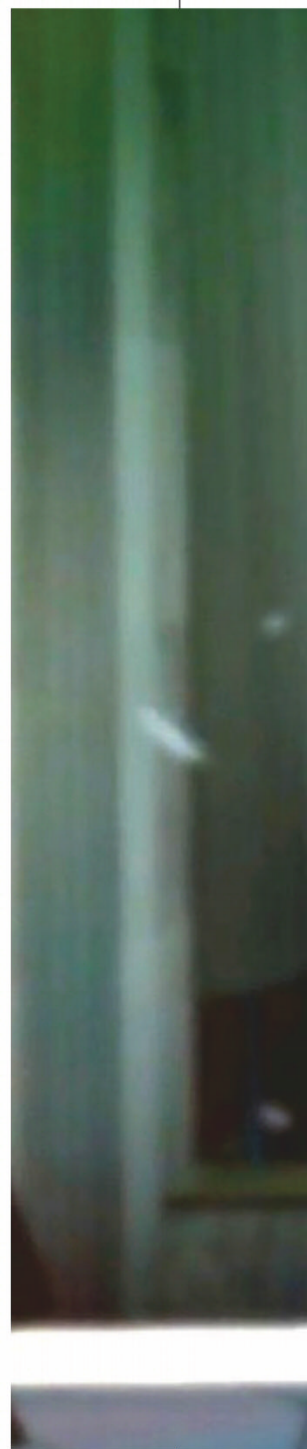
The devs consider Persona 5 a complete work but wanted to continue its ideas in different ways for Royal.

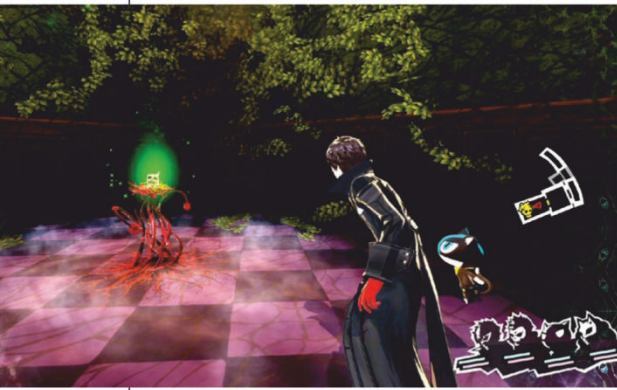
2. FACE FACTS

All the character portraits have been entirely redrawn for the rerelease, refreshing familiar faces.

3. KING-SIZED

Persona 5 Royal is the largest game developed by Atlus to date – it'll keep you playing for over 100 hours.





■ This re-release introduces more Personas, new areas of both Tokyo and the Metaverse, and more Confidants.



"ONE OF THE BIGGEST JRPGS ON PS4 JUST GOT EVEN BIGGER."

039

New girl Kasumi Yoshizawa is pivotal to a lot of the later, previously unseen, content.



Above Your familiar fellow Phantom Thieves will get supercharged thanks to new Ultimate Personas and Showtime attacks.

If Death Stranding hadn't already made us anxious about inclines, Overpass steps it up.

"THE VARIOUS SURFACES YOU DRIVE ON REALLY MAKE A DIFFERENCE."

FORMAT PS4 / ETA 3 MAR / PUB BIGBEN INTERACTIVE / DEV ZORDIX RACING

OVERPASS

Under hill, over hill, rumbling free



Despite the timer ticking steadily away — these obstacle courses are ostensibly competitive — we take a moment to think, idling our engine, sizing up the route ahead. This is our 20th attempt to tackle this final hill in this particular hilltop challenge. At first glance, it's a steep hill, the same as any other. But we know this one now. It's an old, worthy foe by this point. We know that the middle of the incline is too steep to take on straight-up, the approach too bumpy for us to maintain both grip and speed. The right side is too muddy, the clay-like surface causing our wheels to spin up.

No, we'd better take this one carefully. If we bank to the left we can slip our buggy into differential driving mode to give ourselves better purchase, then angle back again to ease over to a resting spot about halfway up where we can gain more grip, switch over to four-wheel drive to use our wheels to wiggle back around, then shoot up the rest of the way. We think we finally have it, only to realise one last little hump stands on top of the hill like a crown.

We attempt to usurp the hump, to take glory with one final push. But we're too delicate on the throttle, hedging our bets in our attempt to try to get the maximum grip possible. It isn't enough. We tumble back, scrabbling for the handbrake at the last minute — here better used for sticking in place than making wild drifts. But we're

a fraction of a second too late. Physics and gravity take hold, and we roll all the way back down, preparing to try again. We'll get it next time.

UPHILL JAM

Hilltop climbs aren't the only challenge in Overpass, which presents you with a range of time trial races involving many crafty obstacles across multiple biomes. More than set-dressing, the various surfaces and obstacles you're up against really make a difference across the 43 tracks, and with 24 vehicles to choose from, you need to pick your vehicle carefully. Your rides are split between UTVs and ATVs, and tracks have different medals for each, as they have their own techniques to learn. UTVs offer more drive modes, whereas a big part of ATV driving is leaning with your driver and staying mounted.

Some longer tracks are courses that throw a whole heap of challenges at you, from natural obstacles like rock formations where you're free to choose your approach to man-made hazards which you're penalised for passing incorrectly (for example, you need to drive off seesaws safely, and over pipes). With so much variety, there are plenty of reasons to get muddy and challenge yourself. ■



Above Whether obstacles are man-made or natural you'll need to think every tyre placement through.

FACTRICK

1. HOT COMPETITION

Split-screen multiplayer is included, and you can enjoy hot-seat play for up to eight people.

2. CRASH OUT

Head-to-heads don't feature collisions, as the real sport is time-trial-based. So no prangs for you!

3. CAREER GOALS

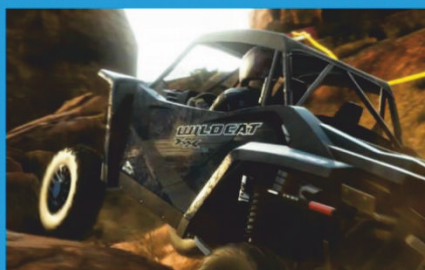
The full career mode challenges you over time, though quickplay has everything unlocked.



Multiple biomes mean you have to think carefully about your approach to a track.

Four-wheeled brandit

Four extreme brands lend their licences to 23 of the game's vehicles



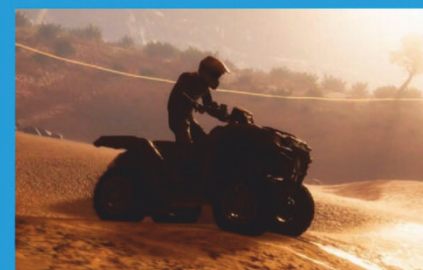
1 America-based Arctic Cat is known for its range of powerful ATVs. Unrelated, the firm also makes snowmobiles, hence its wintry name.



2 Polaris is another American company, renowned for its motorbikes as well as its ATVs. You'll be tackling Overpass' courses in its off-road vehicles.



3 Well-known for its race-winning motocross bikes, Japanese manufacturer Yamaha brings its offroad A-game to the, well, game.

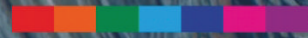


4 Another well-known Japanese motor company, Suzuki, is world-famous for its UTVs, and ATVs and rounds out the quartet of top-class marques.



Left Flooring it often isn't the answer. Go slower, and you'll have more secure grip on the surfaces.

Above Finishing a track on the first attempt takes some physics-defying skill, but go back to master your times.



PREVIEW

You can tear through weak enemies with ease, but the bigger they are, the harder they fall.

042



“CHARACTERS HAVE
UNIQUE WEAPONS
FROM GUNS TO
FIERY SWORDS.”

FORMAT PS4 / **ETA** TBC
PUB CYGAMES / **DEV** CYGAMES, PLATINUMGAMES

GRANBLUE FANTASY: RELINK

We enjoy a knight out with our crew, testing the multiplayer mode



In our previous sessions with Granblue Fantasy: Relink we've seen Gran and the rest of his sky pirate crew take on a single-player story mission; now we're going hands-on with a demo showcasing the online co-op section of the game. What better way to do that than with the series' four pretty-boy Dragon Knights (Lancelot, Vane, Percival, and Siegfried) battling their way to a crashed airship?

As Relink is based on a mobile RPG where players can link up with friends worldwide to fight big bosses, it makes sense that this console-based character action RPG should also embrace multiplayer. Though as PlatinumGames collaborated on designing the base of the game, you can expect some stylish, in-depth combat as well. (Platinum has since moved on to other projects.)

SWORDS OUT

Characters have unique weapons, from guns to fiery swords, which change how each one plays, and with four players to a party that gives you plenty of options. (Expect your favourite emotes from the mobile game to appear.) Plus, in the campaign, we've seen Lyria tagging along to give the party access to special Final Fantasy-like summons. The Dragon Knights, however, go it alone in our preview, albeit with their own special weapons, each providing



PREVIEW



Left Weakened enemies can enter Overdrive, able to unleash powerful attacks for a limited time.

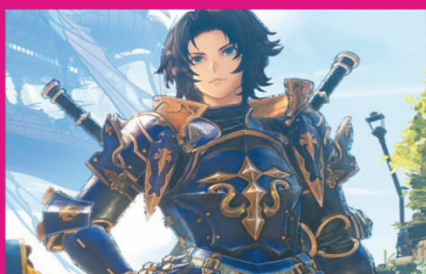
Right Towns are where you can dynamically link up with your friends to take on side-quests together.



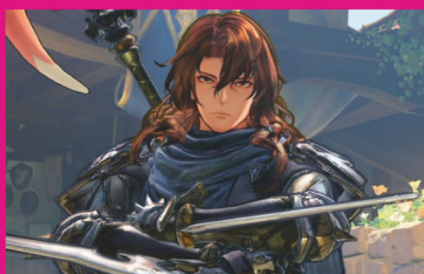
What better way to make friends than juggling enemies together?

Knights of the sky

The Dragon Knights join the roster of skyfarers...



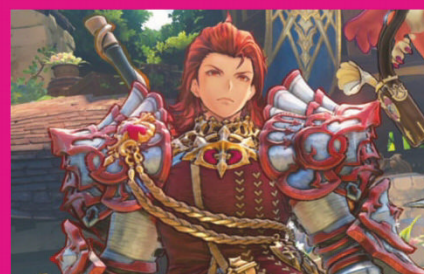
1 Lancelot might be lightning-fast, but the leader of the Order Of The White Dragons and 'Twinfang Prodigy' actually wields the power of ice.



2 Siegfried was wrongly maligned for murdering his king before reconciling with Lancelot to clear his name and fulfil his promises to the old king.



3 Vane is Lancelot's staunchest supporter and has survived his own ordeals to become a knight truly worthy of standing alongside his hero.



4 The flame to Lancelot's ice, Percival considers the White Dragon leader his rival. With flaming sword in hand, he pursues the dream of a land without war.

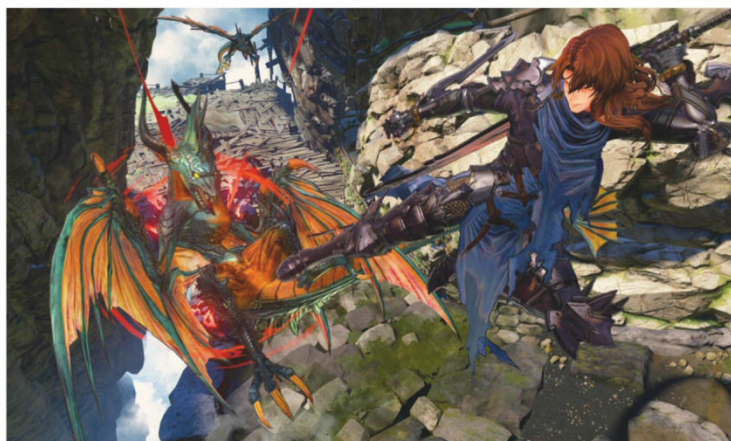


Above Some weapons have elemental effects. For example, Lancelot's nifty pair of shortswords are capable of spewing ice as well as stabbing.

"YOU'LL BE ABLE TO WALK AROUND TOWN, ADJUST YOUR GEAR, AND LINK UP WITH OTHER PLAYERS."



Above Not all skills are offensive. Vane's barrier stops enemy attacks. Other attacks can cause things like Freeze or Fear.



Above Characters share moves like dodges and air combos, but all have unique weapons and skills to keep it fresh.



mastery of different elements. That means they've got a lot of bases covered.

Members of the party battle alongside each other like in a character action game, with the sort of moves you'd expect — attacks on **Ⓢ** and **Ⓟ**, with the option to jump into air combos using **ⓧ** and dodge out of the way of incoming attacks with **Ⓡ**. But you have to team up with your pals to pull off the best combos against the skeletons, drakes, and other monsters of the sky. The link attack button is **Ⓢ**, a press of which has you performing attacks together with nearby allies, increasing your overall link level to give buffs. Kick monsters into the blue sky all you like, but if you're not increasing your attack by fighting alongside the rest of your party, it'll take you longer to clear the decks.

Every character also has four skills operating on cooldowns, which you can always see on the UI. To use these, you hold **Ⓡ** and tap a face button; they can be devastating, crowd-clearing attacks, or skills that will help out the rest of the party. Lancelot's icy daggers, for instance, can freeze enemies in their tracks, even working on stronger enemies and bosses.

BOSSING IT

In our session, our Dragon Knights battle monsters across lush grass and rickety plank walkways through

sky canyons, before coming up against an enormous Ancient Dragon in front of the crashed airship. Because it's got a massive health bar the beast takes a while to beat, forcing all of us to make the best use of our full range of skills and charge attacks. If an ally falls, we can revive them by running up them and spending a few seconds to help get them back on their feet.

Tackling a creature of this size, Relink's almost like Monster Hunter by way of Devil May Cry. The link-based content even spills over into special moves. After building up charge meter, we use special attacks (pressing in both analogue sticks), chaining them one after the other to do a bigger final burst of damage. It's enough to take down

the dragon and uncover treasure chests, but what bigger beasties might await us on the other islands?

SKYFARERS ASSEMBLE

What's great is that, despite the spectacle, this co-op quest is representative of the type of side-missions you're able to take on in addition to the more scenario-based main campaign. On some islands you'll find towns where you're able to walk around, adjust your gear, and link up with other players, using these hubs as a sort of lobby. Speaking to us, Cygames calls it an "on-the-fly co-op system", and teases plenty of side-quests.

If Cygames can get slick, stylish action to work in an ongoing online context as well as the single-player story, this could end up being one of our favourite ways to spend evenings with friends. After all, its work on the mobile game proves the dev's got the chops to keep players engaged over the long-term. We've yet to see a developer really get a Devil May Cry-styled online game right, but we'd put good money on Cygames being the one which could do it. Alongside the great fighting game Granblue Fantasy Versus (check last issue), it seems that the Granblue franchise is ready to take PS4 by storm, and we're prepared to set sail right into its heart. ■

FACTRICK

1. NEW TRICKS

Relink is based on a mobile game, but features a totally original story with new antagonists.

2. CREW MATES

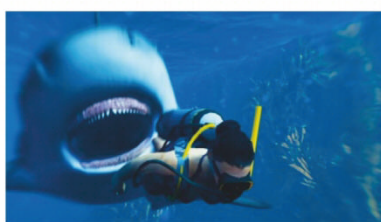
The quartet of Dragon Knights shown here bring the announced roster of heroes to ten.

3. MILLION CLUB

The mobile game just passed 25 million players, so plenty of people should be playing Relink online.

PREVIEW ROUND-UP

Wrapping up this issue's previews, it's less about the destination and all about the journey. Hit the road, Jack, and don't you forget to tend to your crystals, chomp some chumps, and maybe solve a murder...



MANEATER

FORMAT PS4 / **ETA** 22 MAY
PUB DEEP SILVER
DEV TRIPWIRE INTERACTIVE

No, it's not a rhythm game featuring only the best pop bangers from the early noughties: in this, you are literally a shark and eater of men. Born in the choppy waters off the Gulf Coast, you really are what you eat as each meal you enjoy makes you stronger and can even lead to beneficial mutations. Rather than hoovering up pond scum, though, you'll be hunting round docks and beach resorts, dining on swimmers and surfers and earning your name with each bite. You're a wild animal wreaking your revenge on humans – it's a darn sight bloodier than Untitled Goose Game. ■



FINAL FANTASY CRYSTAL CHRONICLES REMASTERED EDITION

FORMAT PS4 / **ETA** TBC / **PUB** SQUARE ENIX
DEV SQUARE ENIX



This co-op JRPG classic was at one time hampered by a hefty hardware requirement. Sixteen years on, you'll soon be able to craft your own adventurer and travel alongside the crystal caravan. Your job is to hack and slash at any monsters looking to get their gums around the crystal, learning more about the world through the people you meet along the way.



LORD WINKLE BOTTOM INVESTIGATES

FORMAT PS4 / **ETA** APR
PUB CAVE MONSTERS
DEV CAVE MONSTERS

No, it wasn't just the fun name that made us include this one – though it certainly helps. There's something charming about this not-very-anthropomorphised cast of animals attempting to solve the murder of a now awfully absent axolotl. As a gentleman giraffe, it's a challenging affair just getting in the door, let alone nosing around for clues in this point-and-click detective game. If the giraffe in a top hat and suit haven't clued you in, there's a subtly surreal tone to everything, making for some delightful sight gags. We're ready to get on the case. ■



FAST & FURIOUS CROSSROADS

FORMAT PS4 / **ETA** MAY
PUB BANDAI NAMCO
DEV SLIGHTLY MAD STUDIOS

We can only hope you're as excited to play this as Vin Diesel and Michelle Rodriguez were to announce it at the Game Awards last December. Set to release alongside the ninth (yes, you read that right) movie, Crossroads gets the gang together for the sort of vehicular heist action you've come to expect from the movie series. With both single- and multiplayer modes, you can strap increasingly improbable hardware on your bonnet throughout this globetrotting, free-wheeling road trip. Put the pedal to the metal, we say. ■



IMMORTAL REALMS: VAMPIRE WARS

FORMAT PS4 / **ETA** SPRING
PUB KALYPSO MEDIA DIGITAL
DEV PALINDROME INTERACTIVE

Dig out your spare pair of fangs and take a bite out of this turn-based strategy game with card-game mechanics, set in an immortal kingdom of vampires. After all, any immortal will tell you that one should always play fairly when one has the winning cards. Three clans are at each other's throats as motions are made to topple the house of Dracul from its long-standing position of power. What follows are 12 campaign missions and a story that flits between the perspectives of a number of vampire lords in a nigh-unending war. ■

TIME TO STEP OFF THAT TREADMILL

With so many demands from work, home and family, there never seem to be enough hours in the day for you. Why not press pause once in a while, curl up with your favourite magazine and put a little oasis of 'you' in your day.



PRESS PAUSE
ENJOY A MAGAZINE MOMENT

To find out more about Press Pause, visit;
pauseyourday.co.uk

WAY OF THE GHOST

Oscar Taylor-Kent breaks down the ten things you need to know about Sucker Punch's open world samurai epic
Ghost Of Tsushima

Jin Kasai is a legend. Some say he died on the beaches of Tsushima, repelling the first Mongol invasion of Japan. Others say he lived on, a one-man army, striking fear into the hearts of the invaders. The truth is for you to discover, as you play the island's last surviving samurai as he tries to save it from devastation at the hands of the occupying army.

Ghost Of Tsushima is Sucker Punch's love letter to Japanese cinema, and a culmination of the previous open worlds it created married to the mastery that only comes from working with PS4 for so many years. Here's everything we know so far, and all the reasons you need to strap on your samurai armour.



GHOST OF TSUSHIMA





NEXT-GEN BLOOD

It's coming to PS4 – but it could straddle generations

Releasing this summer, Ghost Of Tsushima will be one of the last big-budget PlayStation 4 games – a culmination of everything the developer has learned about making games for the console over the years. Based on that alone, you can expect every droplet of power to be squeezed

from the machine to create one of the most advanced games on the system. Also, it's launching quite close to PS5's 'holiday 2020' release date. If The Last Of Us' PS3-to-PS4 remaster is anything to go by, might this be one of the earlier experiences we can try out again on the new hardware?



Here we are at the gate of the next gen. Ready for one final duel, PS4?



*EXPECT EVERY
DROPLET OF POWER
TO BE SQUEEZED
FROM PS4.*



2

1V100

You're the last samurai, facing incredible odds. The sort you can relish!

Set in 1274, the game takes place during the brutal Mongol invasion of the island. As the final samurai on Tsushima, Jin is outmatched by sheer force of numbers. You'll come across ruined villages that have been ransacked by the Mongol forces, who leave a burning trail in their wake. But while

you might be able to hold your own fighting off a few soldiers at once, you'll need to be wary of the mounted army. If you let enemies sound the alarm, you might find the rest of them closer than is comfortable. As it progresses, the game tells you how many days it's been since the Mongol invasion began.



Jin's samurai training makes him fierce in a fight, but even he can only take on so many enemies at once.

GHOST OF TSUSHIMA



(WAY)POINTLESS

You're not just sightseeing as you ride around, you're navigating

The dev team has plenty of experience with open worlds thanks to the InFamous games, but those were set in cities. Jin is exploring rural Tsushima on horseback. The key thing is that there aren't waypoints to follow here. You need to use landmarks and pay attention to what's going on around you –

whether that's following the smoke from a grisly Mongol attack, or making your way to an enemy camp at a temple. Simply choosing where to explore will affect how you experience the story. You're not always being pursued either, as you're able to walk among the inhabitants of Tsushima without hassle.



Can't get lost if there are no waypoints. Only taking meaningful detours. What? We meant to go in circles.

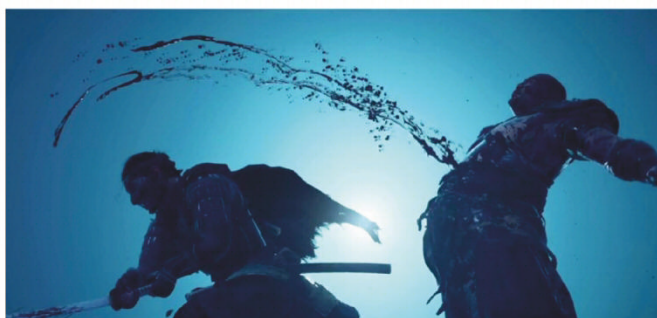


MUD, BLOOD, AND STEEL

Those words sum up your life as the last samurai on Tsushima

They're also the mantra the team has for Ghost Of Tsushima's combat. Jin might be following the Way Of The Ghost, but he's still going to get into scraps. Combat is fast and quick. Jin is a trained samurai and can use a range of sword techniques, including laido – sword strikes made from the quick unsheathing of your katana. Some of the

skills you can develop are rooted in Jin's samurai background, while the dirtier ones he has to learn are less so. Either way, combat is all about those crucial three elements and how they mix. Sucker Punch shows us a photo mode shot taken mid-strike and it's beautiful and brutal at once, droplets of blood mixing with a thicker flow.



We can't get enough of the blood splatter in this game. Which might say something about us.



GHOSTLY POWERS

You appear as suddenly as a spectre and disappear just as silently

While it turns out that Jin Sakai, the island's last samurai and our protagonist, isn't a literal ghost (as far as we know), he still wields spectral powers... of a sort. Up against an army as mighty as the Mongol horde, Jin has to leave his samurai honour by the wayside and master the Way Of The Ghost. This allows him to strike quickly from the shadows to take out opponents stealthily, his quest to liberate the island of Tsushima being more guerrilla than conventional warfare. In combat, Jin covers his face with a half-mask that sports an oni design, part of his Ghost Armour. In folklore oni are ogre-like Japanese demons and types of yokai, which are spirits close to what we'd think of as ghosts in the West.



JIN COVERS HIS FACE WITH A HALF-MASK THAT SPORTS AN ONI DESIGN.



GHOST OF TSUSHIMA

Finally an excuse for us to wear Japanese oni masks to OPM Towers without getting strange looks on the bus.



053



TRAIL BLAZER

One does not simply walk
into a Mongol camp

Where and when you choose to explore are important, but how you approach situations is critical too. Thanks to his ability to clamber onto walls and a grappling hook that allows him to swing from point to point, Jin can move along rooftops unseen. You're also able to clamber across cliffs, using off-the-beaten-track pathways to approach enemy camps indirectly, and then employ stealth to pick off enemies one by one. When above enemies you can jump down to kill them instantly, either to remain hidden as the ghost or simply to begin a fight with the upper hand.



USE OFF-THE-
BEATEN-TRACK
PATHS TO APPROACH
ENEMY CAMPS.



055

See an enemy far below
you? You need to jump
down and stab them.
It's videogame 101.

GHOST OF TSUSHIMA

1



056

2



3



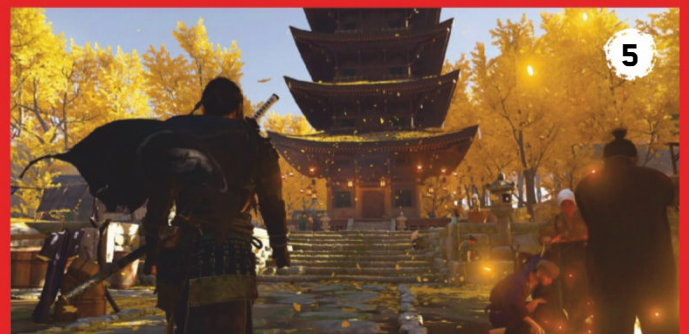
*USE WHATEVER
TACTICS YOU CAN TO
STRIKE FEAR INTO
THE MONGOLS.*



GHOST OF TSUSHIMA



- ❶ Use whatever tactics you can to strike fear into the Mongol general and soldiers who stand in your way. ❷ Saying you're a lone samurai might be a bit of a stretch. You have a horse at your side. ❸ There might not be waypoints to guide you, but the scenery will help. Sucker Punch has crafted a smart world. ❹ Jin's stealthy attacks take cues from ninja, pushing him to become more than a samurai. ❺ Despite the invasion, Tsushima's inhabitants can still be seen, and Jin can assist (or come up against) some of them on his quest. ❻ When Jin's Ghost mask is off, you see him have some human moments of reflection and exhaustion.



GHOST OF TSUSHIMA



SOUND OF YOUR HEART

The audio is as lovingly created as the graphics

To give you an authentic feeling of being in Japan, the game will have dual audio from launch, allowing you to jump right in with Japanese voices and English subtitles, or English audio. What's more, Sucker Punch sent an audio team to Japan to record various sounds, such as birdsong, that appear in the game. If that's not enough, the music is being composed by Shigeru Umebayashi, a masterful musician with a rich history of scoring Japanese and Chinese films, including House Of Flying Daggers, Yumeji, and Fearless.

This image perfectly represents sound. Stare at it. Imagine that birdsong. There you go.

059



SUCKER PUNCH SENT AN AUDIO TEAM TO JAPAN TO RECORD VARIOUS SOUNDS.



GHOST OF TSUSHIMA



8



YOU CAN SET
ARROWS ON FIRE SO
THEY IGNITE ENEMIES
WHEN THEY HIT.





There's no smoke without fire, and we pin Jin as something of a firestarter...

NINJA TOOLS

You've a silent but very deadly arsenal

There's plenty of crossing swords, but thanks to his newfound commitment to the Way Of The Ghost, Jin has plenty of extra tools to help him out outside direct combat. Smoke grenades allow him to disorient enemies to get the drop on them and pull off single-hit kills; sticky grenades can be thrown at enemies before

they explode; and he can use a bow to pick off unsuspecting enemies from a distance. Of course, you can set arrows on fire so they ignite enemies when they hit. The fire effects that light up some of the night-time scenes look fantastic, so we expect we haven't seen the last of what you can accomplish with flames.



STRONGER TOGETHER

You might be the last samurai but you're not the sole freedom fighter

During our initial demo we got to see Jin duel with Masako, a female archer who's equally talented with a sword, after she helps him infiltrate a temple. She has a bone to pick with him for saving a monk who betrayed her family (and their fight is interrupted partway through by some Mongols). But in conversation with the

devs, they suggested there are other ways this relationship could develop. Jin might be a solitary Ghost in some respects, but only by banding together with the other residents of Tsushima can he become something more. Further playthroughs might see events play out differently depending on who you can call friend or foe.



Jin's best allies on the island are going to be very good at using swords. Better not cross them.



THRONE OF MUD

The influence of classic Japanese film shows in breathtaking settings

Sucker Punch has cited inspiration from Japanese samurai cinema, particularly Akira Kurosawa's filmography – as a beautiful wide shot demonstrates, showing Jin and his horse leaving a forest, leaves blowing,

small in the frame. Kurosawa's Throne Of Blood, Seven Samurai, and Sanjuro are definitive works of samurai pop culture, and their influence can be seen in what we've seen of Jin's quest so far. ■



Beautiful environments mean Jin's mission is going to get sidetracked by us pausing to look at flowers.

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Getting Nierer

We talk with Yoko Taro and Naoki Yoshida about bringing a crossover raid series based on Nier: Automata to FFXIV

064

Crossovers aren't unusual for Final Fantasy XIV. The constantly growing MMO has had its fair share of teamups with other games since it launched in 2010, with special events running alongside massive expansions over the years. Characters from other Final

Fantasy games have made special appearances, and series including Monster Hunter and Dragon Quest have got in on the action. But Nier is rather different from those, considering its subversive brand of nihilistic philosophy.

Even so, Final Fantasy XIV never does things by halves. The Nier: Automata crossover raid series, YoRHa: Dark Apocalypse, incorporates many themes from its source material, and is being written by famed Nier series creator Yoko Taro. We spoke with the man himself, and with Final Fantasy XIV's producer and director, Naoki Yoshida, about kicking off the first part of the raid series.

OPM: Nier: Automata doesn't seem like an obvious choice to cross over with Final Fantasy XIV. How did the idea come about?

Yoko Taro: I think this project came about when I had the opportunity to



The Copied Factory, part one of the raid, is out now, with more parts to follow. There's no time to waste!



THE OPM INTERVIEW

“ I WANTED TO WORK WITH YOKO-SAN SO I BRIBED HIM WITH DRINKS AND STEAK. ”

» talk with producer Yoshida for a completely different matter. But I was eating a delicious steak at the time, and I was so invested in it that I wasn't listening. (Just kidding.)

Naoki Yoshida: From all over the world, we had been receiving requests saying that they want to wear outfits from the Nier series and for us to collaborate. Then I thought that it would be much more interesting to collaborate on a game level rather than just equipment. Plus I wanted to work with Yoko-san so I bribed him with drinks and steak.

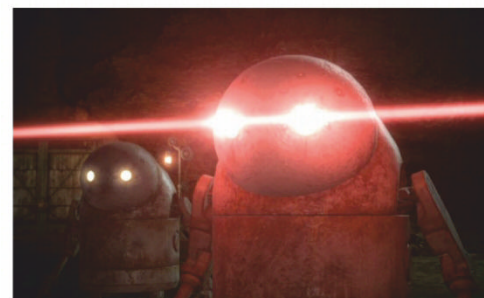
OPM: How closely did you work together when designing the YoRHa: Dark Apocalypse raids?

YT: We had a short discussion together regarding the concept at the beginning. For the actual work, I entrusted it with the team. I was so happy with how the Final Fantasy XIV team respected Nier: Automata as a title, so I got a little carried away with my requests... Sorry about that.

NY: Mainly for the outline of the project, what we aim to achieve with the crossover, and checking the direction and overall plot. Yoko-san is the one who actually draws up the plot and writes the text, while it is the Final Fantasy XIV dev team's job to implement it. My job is to eliminate any obstacles that could get in their way. I'm actually a little jealous of everyone else [laughs].



Never seen without his mask, Taro is known for his unusual games.



Middle The raid's fights use bullet hell mechanics from Nier: Automata. **Left** Nier's android fashion shows up. **Right** Red-eyed robots are never a good thing.

OPM: Final Fantasy XIV and the Nier series play very differently from each other. Have either of you learned new things from collaborating on YoRHa: Dark Apocalypse?

YT: I didn't know what kind of person Yoshida-san was until this project, so I was a little scared. After meeting him in person, I could see that he was a hard-working and powerful person. He'd be my choice for a future president of Square Enix.

NY: I'd heard all sorts of rumours about Yoko-san from various sources, so I was a little scared before I met him. When I actually met him in person, none of the rumours were true. He's such a gentleman, with the

NEED TO KNOW



2017 RETURN TO IVALICE

■ This raid series took us back to the world of Final Fantasy XII, from the streets of Rabanastre to the Lighthouse. Ivalice's creator, Yasumi Matsuno, had input on its creation.

2018 THE HUNT FOR RATHALOS

■ Boss fights in the MMO are often epic, but the one with a Rathalos from Monster Hunter: World took the cake, incorporating mechanics from the hunting series into FFXIV's combat.

2019 A NOCTURNE FOR HEROES

■ Poor Noctis from Final Fantasy XV got lost in your world, and you had to help him find his way back. On completion, you got the Regalia car as a mount.

YT: The process of making MMO games had many aspects that were different from normal console games, so it was full of surprises. For example: "It's okay to attack even if you can't see the target (because the player will learn the attacks)", "The music is synchronised between all raid players", "Everybody will skip the pre-raid event so it should be kept short"... It was fun to experience an alternative future where videogames evolved differently.

OPM: Yoko-san, had you played a lot of MMOs before coming to this particular project?

YT: I bought the package version of the original Ultima Online when people started talking about it, but my connection was too weak so I only played it for around 30 minutes. I also played Dragon Quest X, but I played it so much that I didn't get much work done. Since my work on a Square Enix game was being hindered by playing a Square Enix game, I had to regrettably stop.

OPM: Nier: Automata's combat system mixes hack-and-slash with shoot-'em-up bullet hell elements. How did you translate that into the MMO gameplay of the raid?

YT: I entrusted the gameplay aspect entirely to the Final Fantasy XIV team. Thanks to their

Naoki Yoshida is known affectionately as Yoshi-P to FFXIV fans.



personality of a saint. I'd love to see him reign as a don of the games industry.

OPM: What was the most surprising aspect about designing for an MMO versus the more hack-and-slash-focused Nier series?



efforts, I think that the battles are packed with elements of Nier.

NY: Everyone who worked on the content design for things such as boss battles are all Nier fans, so they've replayed everything for this project. They know what can and cannot be done in Final Fantasy XIV better than anyone else, so they racked their brains as to how they can reimagine Nier as part of Final Fantasy XIV. Please look forward to the surprises in store for the coming raids.

OPM: The Nier series has always been subversive. Have you brought that quality to Final Fantasy XIV?

YT: Not all of the scenarios have been released yet, so that's a secret.

OPM: The Copied Factory is out now but YoRHa: Dark Apocalypse will continue for some time. How do you split up raid content to ensure people want to come back when you release the new parts?

YT: I responded to the question above that it's a secret because not all of the scenarios have been released yet, but the truth is that they actually haven't been finished yet. I have no idea what's in store, which is exciting!

NY: We will continue to bring surprises that will make people want to play when they see the videos, and make them think 'You're really doing that in an MMO RPG?!' so please look out for announcements.

OPM: How did you plan out the Nier loot players can earn from The Copied Factory? Was there anything you wanted to include that wasn't possible?

NY: We debated a lot about how the player can obtain 2B's equipment. Just giving it as a reward for completing a quest would be too simple, but a single-drop loot between 24 people would be too tight. As a compromise, we came up with a three-drop loot between 24 people. I complete it every week myself, but I still haven't got it... don't assume you'll get it if you roll anything other than 99!

OPM: Would you be tempted to work on a main Final Fantasy? What would a Final Fantasy by Yoko Taro look like?

YT: I hear that the Western audience prefers realistic games, so I would make it so realistic that the characters go to the bathroom. Of course, the bathroom scene would be a playable QTE.

OPM: Besides Final Fantasy XIV, which is your favourite game in the Final Fantasy series?

YT: I like Final Fantasy XII. I think there are similarities with Final Fantasy XIV, and the graphics are tasteful to my liking.

OPM: Raids are high-end content in an MMO. Newer players might find these large 24-person raids intimidating. What would you say to those who're nervous about joining in?

YT: As a beginner, I'm intimidated too! ■

YOU ALWAYS REMEMBER YOUR FIRST



As PlayStation enters its 25th year in the UK, we look back at the start of our enduring relationship

The original PlayStation is 25 years old in the UK this September – and what an impact it made! The big 25 also puts it well on its way to a quarter-life crisis. As PlayStation 5's debut looms, now is the perfect time to consider the impact of the little grey box, its many successors, and the first games we loved.

WHAT YOU REMEMBER

What is the first PlayStation game you played? And which had the most impact?

We asked and the OPM readers answered. You shared so much more than just the first games you remember playing – perhaps one or two people even overshaed. For every naughty tweet about Tekken (that we absolutely cannot print) and for every responder insisting that an internet ghost story was in fact their first game, there were plenty more responses that celebrated 25 years of PlayStation history. Here is a selection of some of our favourites. Is yours here?

WITH FEELING

“It was Kingdom Hearts for me... I mean I’ve played PS1 games but to actually own a PS2 and get to sit and play it on my time... Kingdom Hearts was it”
@LeX_215

“Actua Soccer 2. Still the best commentary in any football game.”
@hillsiola

“Riiiiidge Racer!”
@FranklinMargate



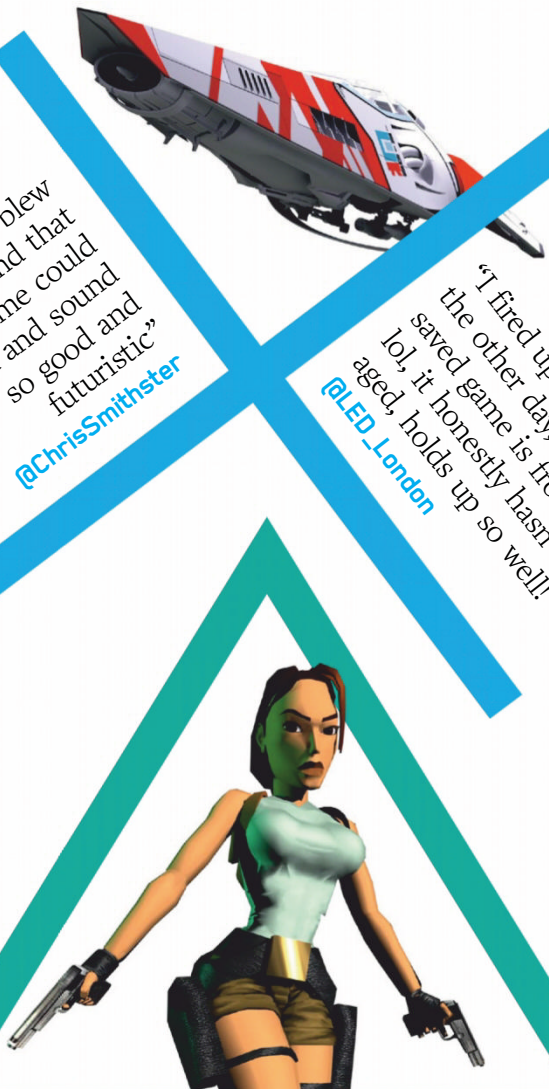
“GTA San Andreas playa!”
@Tictakeeo08



“Battle Arena Toshinden (deserves a reboot btw)”
@DjDarkLink

“Wipeout, blew my mind that a game could look and sound so good and futuristic”
@ChrisSmithster

“I fired up my PSP the other day, Wipeout lol, it honestly hasn’t aged, holds up so well!”
@LED_London



“[Tomb Raider!] 3D! And platforming? And guns? With a random T-Rex? Sold!”
@StevieHoudini

WHAT WE REMEMBER

You may have asked yourself, “Where does it all start for someone who writes about games?” The answer is more mundane than you might suspect – there are no arcane rituals, pacts with the gaming gods or eerie portraits consigned to our attics. At least, not that we’d tell you about. Here are the games that started it all for each of us.

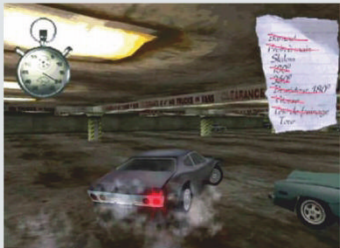


IAN DEAN
EDITOR

My first PlayStation game was also my first experience of the highs and lows of day-one launch games. My sister’s friend came over with her PS1 and we sat down to play Battle Arena Toshinden. Today it’s not looked on as a

great fighter, and even in 1995 on a PS1 it was nothing to shout about. The 3D visuals wowed, and I convinced myself it was the future, but my Neo Geo CD was calling to me with the chime of Samurai Shodown II, and how could I resist? It wasn’t until Castlevania: Symphony Of The Night that PlayStation made a mark on my gaming consciousness;

despite 3D being the new thing I still couldn’t drag myself away from two-dimensional gaming. Really, however, it was my first job in the industry and playing an early build of Driver that wedded me to PlayStation, and that’s despite being stuck in that *blorp!*ing garage for days. While my first game was memorable it was the variety



of game styles, ideas, and worlds that PlayStation offered, and still offers, that ensured I’ve remained a fan.

THE FAMILY THAT PLAYS TOGETHER,
STAYS TOGETHER ...

“Metal Gear Solid with my uncle Johnny. Game still blows my mind to this day”
[@EthanPendejas](#)



“My dad got me a PS1 for my 10th or 11th birthday, first thing he put on was Road Rash and played it in front of me while I got ready for school, we had lots of Road Rash games together after that.”
[@xain445](#)



“My brother let me watch him play FF7 when I was like 5 or 6 years old. That was my first PlayStation game. I hope the [Final Fantasy 7 Remake] brings back that initial excitement I had as a kid.”
[@cosimosis](#)

“Tekken 3 on my Mom’s PS1. She was a gamer in the 90s, lol”
[@rawwestmanalive](#)



“p ain, p a in PAIN! I remember playing Pain on the ps3 with my dad.”
[@l4n_Sc4nlon](#)



“First game I ever remember playing is GTA San Andreas on my brother’s PS2, I was really young and would just bike around and run from the police. I had no idea how to really play but I had a lot of fun”
[@Mc_Girl12](#)

...OR NOT

“Xmas ’97 I got my PlayStation with Crash Bandicoot, Tekken 2, Adidas Power Soccer and Porsche Challenge. Many hours were spent, not one second was wasted [...] What a Christmas it was! I didn’t speak to my family for days #predatorkick”
[@mwtriggs](#)

WHAT WE REMEMBER



MILFORD COPPOCK
ART EDITOR

I was at art college in Carlisle in 1994 when the original PlayStation was released in Japan. Back then, the internet didn’t exist as we know it today, so I relied on getting all my information on the latest games from

magazines like our sister title Edge, among others. After reading Edge’s coverage of the PS1 and its launch lineup, I ended up taking out a student loan and paying north of £750 to import a Japanese PS1 from an ad in the back of the mag. As part of the bundle, I received copies of launch titles Ridge Racer and mech FPS Kileak: The Blood, and

I remember waiting patiently for a week or so for the parcel to turn up. Suffice to say that when it did eventually arrive, the first game I tried out was Ridge Racer. I’d spent a crazy amount of money in the arcades a year or so before on perfecting my

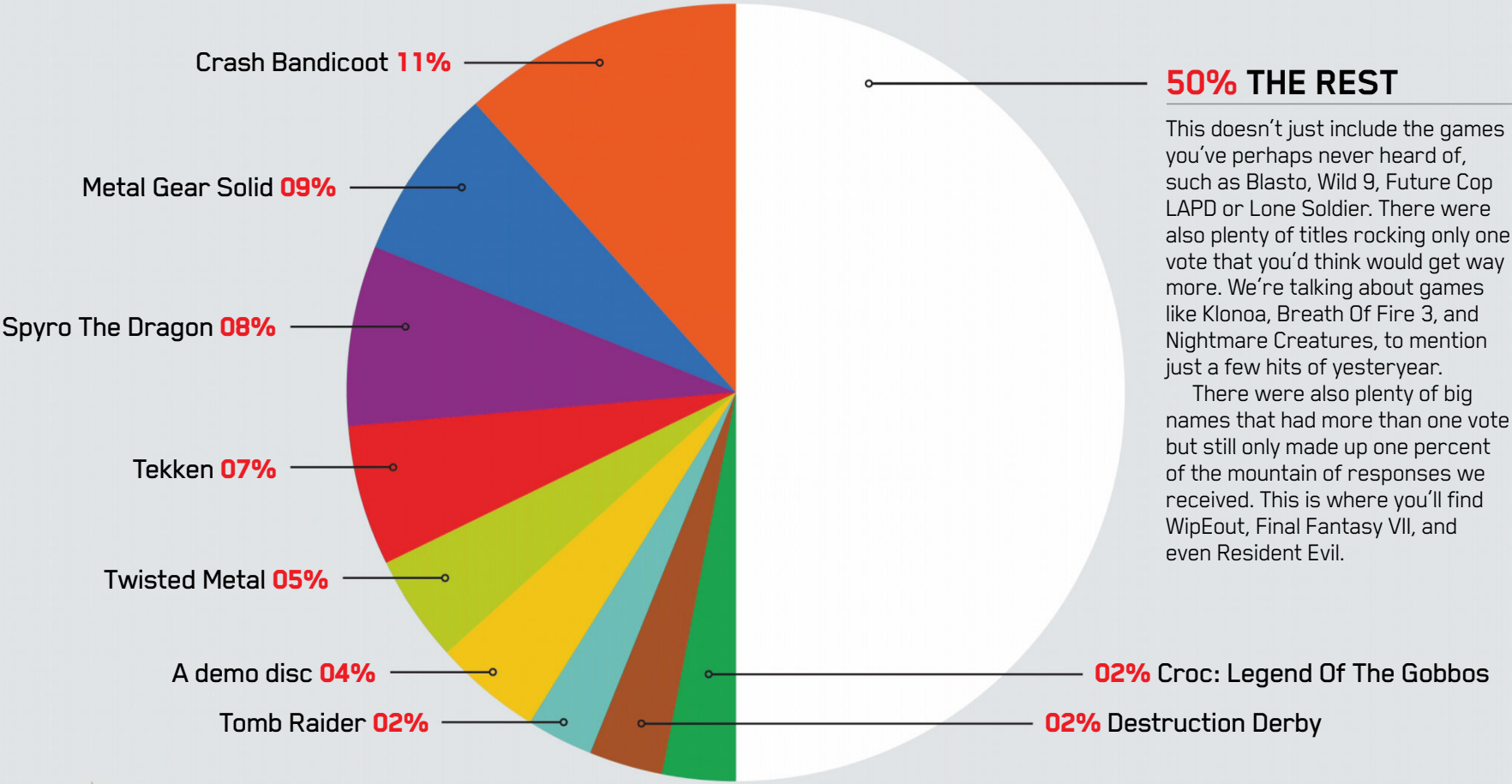


powerslide technique, so I was already familiar with the tracks and how it handled, but what I didn’t expect was how close to a perfect arcade conversion it would be. In my own flat. On a home console. It was a mind blowing experience. Every

polygon, every powerslide. It was a perfectly precise port, on an incredibly powerful piece of hardware. I’d lean into every corner and squeal with glee as I nailed lap after perfect lap. I rinsed every bit of gameplay out of that one disc. Flipped tracks, reverse tracks, hell I even loved playing Galaga as it loaded! I was incredibly skint, but I didn’t care; I had Ridge Racer!

THE MOST POPULAR FIRST GAMES

A certain orange marsupial was many people's first PlayStation experience



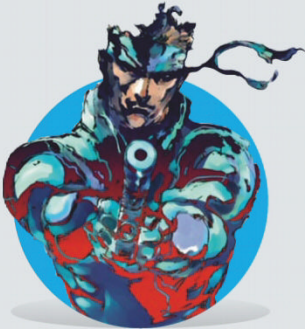
This doesn't just include the games you've perhaps never heard of, such as Blasto, Wild 9, Future Cop LAPD or Lone Soldier. There were also plenty of titles rocking only one vote that you'd think would get way more. We're talking about games like Klonoa, Breath Of Fire 3, and Nightmare Creatures, to mention just a few hits of yesteryear.

There were also plenty of big names that had more than one vote but still only made up one percent of the mountain of responses we received. This is where you'll find WipEout, Final Fantasy VII, and even Resident Evil.



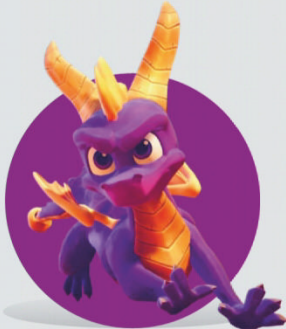
CRASH BANDICOOT

Is it any surprise that PlayStation's own orange whirlwind claimed such a large share of the vote? Between Crash Bash, good old CTR, the Bandicoot's premier platforming outing, and, uh, The Wrath Of Cortex, he gives one heck of an introduction to the PlayStation family! His devilish attitude sold PlayStations.



METAL GEAR SOLID

Who else would sneak up behind the top spot? However, we hope that this doesn't mean Snake is about to put Crash to sleep. Even at this early point in his career, Kojima wore his cinematic influences on his sleeve. This game's presentation, on top of its tactical espionage action, hooked many and never let them go.



SPYRO THE DRAGON

You obviously love your brightly coloured puzzle platformer protagonists. The original scale baby flew into many hearts way back when and has stayed there ever since, atop a pile of gems. If you missed out back in the day, then we recomend you hunt down PS4's Spyro Reignited Trilogy, it's hot, hot, hot!



A DEMO DISC

Talk about a bygone era. The humble demo disc – often enclosed with this very mag's predecessors – not only introduced existing gamers to their next favourite but they also showed plenty of yet-to-be-gamers a whole new world, no PSN account or internet connection required. Don't you miss the old days sometimes?

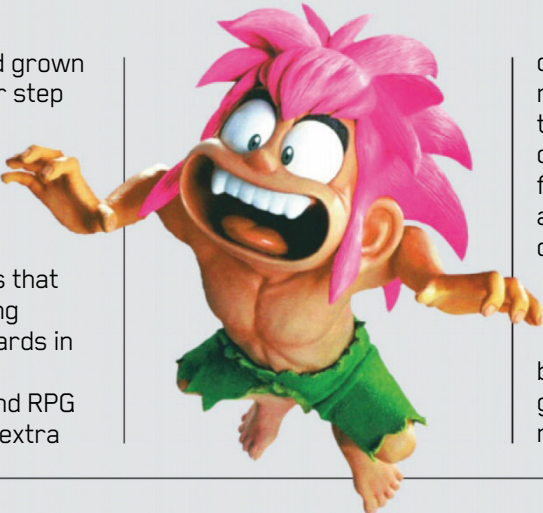


OSCAR TAYLOR-KENT
GAMES EDITOR

What a strange thing Tomba! was. You played a pink-haired wild body leaping around, tackling pigs, and clambering over walls to track down a lost piece of jewellery. It was in many ways just like the 2D

16-bit platformers I'd grown up playing, but a clear step forward. Yes, it was side-scrolling and on a 2D plane like the classics, but it had foreground and background elements that would have you moving backwards and forwards in the screen.

It also had story and RPG elements that added extra



depth to the experience, making the game much more than a simple platformer. At one point you were looking for a missing child, and at another you had the challenge of backtracking over an area to find another route forwards.

Despite being a fairly basic, if vibrantly coloured, game, it felt like so much more at the time, a massive



advance in what videogames were capable of no matter what particular genre you were a fan of.

FIRST GAMES

GOSH, WE FEEL OLD

“WipEout but also messing around with the 3D T-Rex [on the Demo One disc]. Only a small thing now but back then it was immense”
@Quak3r72

“Skeleton Warriors. A video store near me used to allow people to play games in the back for \$2 an hour. I chose Skeleton Warriors because it was based off a show I was watching lol. Fun fact: It was Neversoft’s (Tony Hawk’s Pro Skater) first game”
@Sric360



“Tony Hawk Pro Skater. [First] game I bought was Resident Evil 2. Paid \$54 at the PX in Japan. Happy Anniversary PlayStation!”
@JacobPA19

“Total Drivin’ was the first game I ever played about 22 years ago. This might explain why I’m quite good at racing games.”
@ant281090

“I remember a friend hyping up Twisted Metal. I got to play a demo at Blockbuster Video, and I ended up finding a [second] hand games store and selling [all of my old consoles] and games for a PS1 and the game Loaded.”
@Metalyger

OVERCOMING OBSTACLES

“Syphon Filter 2! What an amazing game that kept me up and was one of the games that would also make you rage!”
@everythingluis



“[Abe’s Exoddus] was so fun until I had to save the blind ones.”
@Alexand43265920

WHAT WE REMEMBER



JESS KINGHORN
STAFF WRITER

On a holiday to Devon, a family friend hashed out a plan to distract me from pestering the neighbourhood cats. Yes, my earliest PlayStation memory starts with – what else? – a demo disc. I got stuck on both

Disney’s Hercules and Oddworld: Abe’s Oddysee within the first four screens. Videogame literacy was a hard-won skill from there. Many moons later, my sister and I found a brand-new PlayStation 2 tucked under the Christmas tree. The New Year break was spent burning rubber in The Simpsons Hit & Run, trying to see how far we could get

before switching off the console for the day and losing all our progress. Our IT professional parents had thought that the console would happily save our data onto its own internal storage – you know, like a computer. After repeated explanation that, no, this wasn’t the case, my sister and I were soon

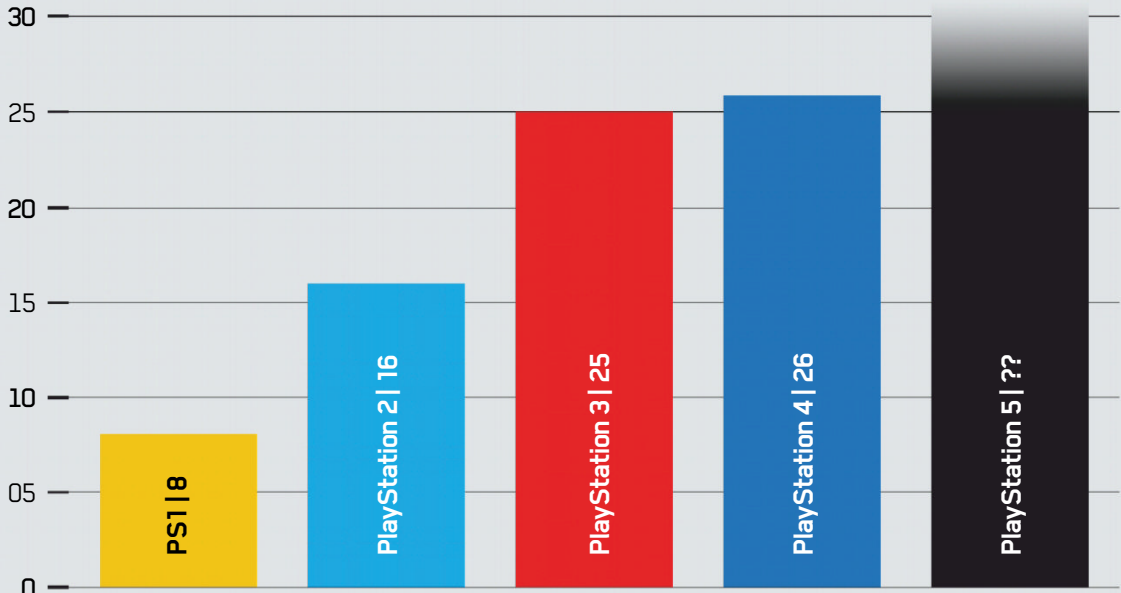


given our own memory cards that, despite not looking anything alike, would somehow still lead to confusion and lost save data. But I think my mum’s first PlayStation game is definitely cooler. Fast-forward to when I was too broke to buy myself a PlayStation 3 but not quite

broke enough to pass up a good deal on a classic game. Finally, my very own copy of Final Fantasy IX! And my mum mentioned she maybe... sort of... perhaps would quite like to play it too. I gave her two original PlayStation memory cards that she quickly dubbed ‘Mum 01’ and ‘Mum 02’ with her label maker. She’d never know the pain of lost save data.

LAUNCH PAD

How many launch titles did each console have on release day in Europe?



STARTING LINE

PlayStation's eight launch games are far from a distant memory, with Battle Arena Toshinden, Jumping Flash, Ridge Racer, and WipEout appearing again and again in the responses we received. However, the other half of the lineup from '95 seems to have been relegated to the annals of history. Anyone remember Kileak: The Blood, Novastorm, Rapid Reload, or 3D Lemmings? Milf's got his hand up, but he's on his own...



SECOND WIND

PlayStation 2's list of launch games was twice as large as its predecessor's but got a lot less love in our survey. In Europe it included forgettable sport games (FIFA 2001, NHL 2001, Ready 2 Rumble Boxing: Round 2, International Soccer Superstar), more memorable racers (Wild Wild Racing, Smuggler's Run, SSX, Ridge Racer V), quirky puzzlers (Fantavision, Aqua Aqua), and shooters (Silent Scope, TimeSplitters, Gradius III and IV), plus the JRPG time forgot (Orphen: Scion Of Sorcery - gee, we wonder why that slipped our minds) and Tekken Tag Tournament.

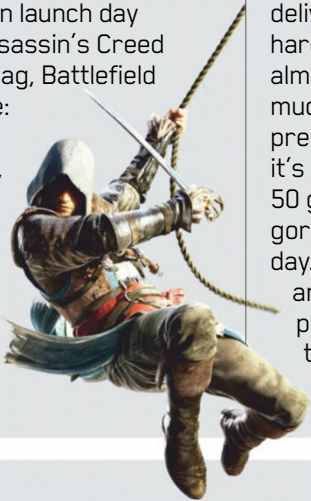
THREE'S COMPANY

The extended launch lineup PlayStation 3 boasted was owing in part to the advent of the digital download. When the PlayStation Network debuted, you could buy and play Blast Factor, Flow, Gran Turismo HD Concept, GripShift, Lemmings, and Tekken Dark Resurrection completely digitally. It was far from slim pickings for physical releases, though, with 25 titles available at launch. Highlights from this deluge include MotorStorm, Call of Duty 3, and Virtua Fighter 5.



FOUR'S SCORE

2013 seems a lifetime ago yet somehow also just yesterday. PlayStation 4 launch games were so numerous there are too many for us to print here, but highlights from the 26 titles available on launch day include Assassin's Creed IV: Black Flag, Battlefield 4, Injustice: Gods Among Us, Resogun, and Knack... so bad it's good, and bad again.



FIVE'S FUTURE

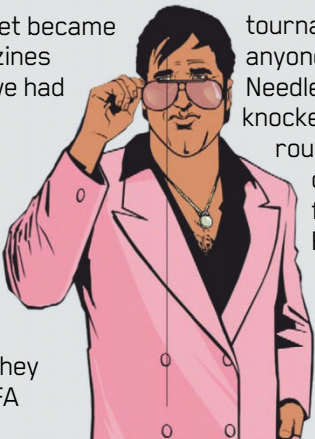
So after all that what's in store for PlayStation 5? All shall be revealed in due course but it's tricky to extrapolate much from this data; there seems to be a definite trend of Sony delivering 'experimental' hardware exclusives and almost every lineup offering much more than its predecessor, but we reckon it's highly unlikely we'll have 50 games to play on our gorgeous new PS5 on launch day. Besides, if there's anything we've learnt from previous generations, it's that less might just be more anyway...



MIRIAM MCDONALD
OPERATIONS EDITOR

Terrible confession time - back when I played my first PlayStation game, I didn't own a PlayStation, I had a console from another manufacturer. I was already working for Future, and this was the days

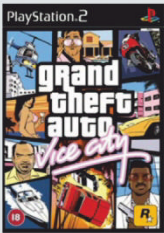
before the internet became popular so magazines were huge, and we had a massive videogames department, with the forerunner of this very magazine right at the head of the pack. For the 1998 World Cup they had a massive FIFA



tournament, which anyone could join in with. Needless to say, I got knocked out in the first round, having no clue about either football nor the PlayStation controller, but it was still great fun. The game that had the biggest

early impact on me was Grand Theft Auto: Vice City. Remember the days when magazines had guide books on the cover? I do; I had to fact-check and edit the things! And what grabbed me about GTA was the story. Nothing before it had ever felt as interesting or exciting - sorry, Lara - and that,

combined with an editor who insisted on playing the Emotion 98.3 CD from the soundtrack box set on loop really fixed it in my mind. I can't hear those songs to this day without thinking of GTA. Vice City taught me that PlayStation was the place where stories really came alive.



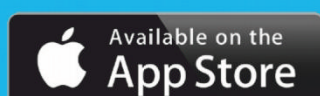
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REVIEWS



76 ZOMBIE ARMY 4: DEAD WAR

Nazis that won't stay dead, eh? We'll see about that.

OPM SCORES

GOLD AWARD

PlayStation.
Official Magazine - UK

GOLD AWARD

Awarded to a game that's brilliantly executed on every level, combining significant innovation, near-flawless gameplay, great graphics and lasting appeal.

EDITOR'S AWARD

PlayStation.
Official Magazine - UK

EDITOR'S AWARD

Not at the very highest echelon, but this is a game that deserves recognition and special praise based on its ambition, innovation or other notable achievement.

10 INCREDIBLE

The kind of phenomenal experience rarely seen in a console generation.

9 OUTSTANDING

Unreservedly brilliant – this should be in every collection.

8 VERY GOOD

A truly excellent game, marred by just a few minor issues.

7 GOOD

A great concept unfulfilled or the familiar done well, but still well worth playing.

6 DECENT

Fun in parts, flawed in others, but more right than wrong.

5 AVERAGE

What you expect and little more, this is for devotees only.

4 BELOW AVERAGE

Any bright ideas are drowning in a sea of bugs or mediocrity.

3 POOR

A seriously flawed game with little merit on any level.

2 AWFUL

Disgraceful: the disc would be more beneficial as a coaster.

1 HORRIFIC

Own this and you'll be swiftly, justifiably, exiled from society.

075

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This beastie can't see,
but it can hear you
coming. Best stealth past
or it's certain death.

076

"WHY HAS MY ON-SCREEN
ZOMBIE HUNTER BROUGHT A
SNIPER RIFLE TO A HORDE SHOOT?"

EDITOR'S
AWARD

PlayStation

BRAIN DEAD?

@IanDean4

ZOMBIE ARMY 4: DEAD WAR

Is it a grave new approach
to horde shooters?



INFO
FORMAT PS4
ETA OUT NOW
PUB REBELLION
DEV REBELLION

The synth music rises, and out of the fog at the lake's edge the shambling undead stumble into view, their glowing eyes teasing the mass of bloodied bodies shuffling our way. If you grew up on the schlocky horror films of Argento and Bava you'll revel in this game's atmosphere; if you read those names as designer Italian coffees have no fear, the tightly designed horde shooter lurking beneath the style will still satisfy you.

If you haven't played a Zombie Army game before you'll begin your first fight for survival scratching your head and asking: "Why has my on-screen zombie hunter brought a sniper rifle to a horde shoot?" While similar shooters offer machine guns and shotguns, handy for close-quarters corpse crowd control, Zombie Army 4: Dead War arms you with a scoped rifle. That's because this series spun off from Rebellion's Sniper Elite V2, and now adopts the superior controls, handling, and reworked locations of PS4's Sniper Elite 4.

BONE APPÉTIT

And it works. Picking off zombies with a sniper rifle, tapping **R1** to hold your breath to zero in for headshots or even pick apart a zombie limb by limb, feels incredibly satisfying. That each level feels spacious and developed to accommodate sharpshooters is telling, but you'll regularly be called upon to shuffle to your secondary weapon as the horde grows.

As we push forward through the levels, moving from one gated zone to the next to survive a mixed bag of zombies and 'heavies' — weapon-carrying monstrosities — the game's intricacies and strategies begin to shine. There's genuine





Right As the game's based on Sniper Elite 4, you often need to snipe the horde from high ground.



Left Hitting a perfect shot rewards you with exploding bodies, as well as points.

➤ stress to many of these skirmishes as we empty our M1 Garand and the zombies keep coming; we withdraw and turn to our Thompson but the horde keeps surging forwards. Finally, back against the wall, we rely on our revolver to pick off the stragglers as they lunge for us.

DEAD GOOD

There's a fine line being staggered down here as *Zombie Army 4* plays it dead straight. *Zombie Hitler* is back from the grave (again) and has created a supernatural army to terrorise post-World War 2 Europe. It's a premise the devs treat like a serious war story while layering on arcade perks, rewards, and buffs.

Although you can't upgrade your character (options include *Sniper Elite*'s Karl Fairburne, *Zombie Army*'s Boris, and new heroes Shola and Jun), each of the game's guns can be modded to improve accuracy and mag size, and tweaked in more fantastical ways, such as adapted to fire explosive and electrical shots. Later, a Vampire scope enables you to earn health with every skill

shot you make, doubling down on the arcade tone and puns.

In the heat of battle this side of the game becomes a tactical crutch to lean on. The greater your combo count, the more abilities you can unlock; string kills together to earn a melee attack (one sets enemies alight, another rewards you with health). More combos will enable a takedown move to earn health and unlock a weapon's special shot — the sniper rifle will fire a powerful bullet that explodes the first enemy and knocks down any surrounding zombies with its aftershock. The game offers a distinct risk-and-reward loop; the sense that one more kill can unlock an ability to earn health or hinder the horde's advance drives you forwards.

STAY THE CORPSE

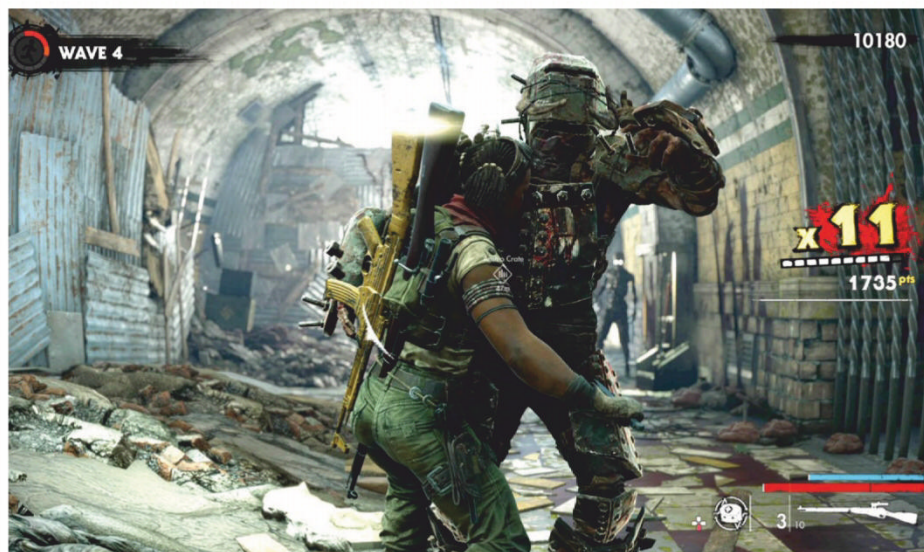
In the story mode the pace is kept up admirably, and each country you visit on the road to face off against zombie Hitler

in the bowels of Hell (and beyond), is beautifully crafted to feel unique, but there's unavoidable repetition at the game's bleeding heart.

Each stage is a series of horde survival zones in which you must defend a mission objective while a ceaseless, cannibalistic mass made up of bullet-spraying, armour-plated, shambling brain-eaters inches ever closer.

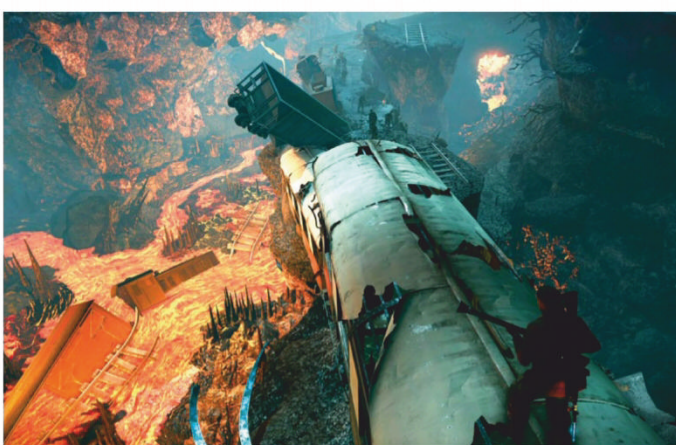
What sets these moments apart from other, similar, shooters is the game's shared DNA with *Sniper Elite 4*, which lends *Zombie Army 4* a tactical layer that gives each fight a new dimension, especially in co-op. Mines, electrical tripwires, incendiary traps, and more aid you in Home-Along-ing the area in anticipation of the enemies' arrival. There's a smug satisfaction that comes from placing a series of traps which snare and control the lumbering undead while you snipe safely from afar.

"EACH OF THE GAME'S GUNS CAN BE MODDED TO IMPROVE ACCURACY AND MAG SIZE."



Above Shola is new to the series. Like all the characters she can get in close for a takedown.

Right The game reworks Karl Fairburne's WW2 world in hellish ways... mind the gap.



Above Enemies come in all sizes, including zombie tanks and 'heavy' hitters.



This doesn't completely exempt *Zombie Army 4* from its repetition. But don't let that stop you enjoying some of the most gratifying guns and gore we've seen for some time. Every bullet connects with an audible zip, pang, or splush, depending on whether you've landed a kill shot or merely grazed an enemy. You're constantly rewarded with exploding heads, shot-off limbs, and, if targeted, bursting body parts.

PULP PADDING

Rebellion's attempted to make the levels more than connected arenas, hiding items and scares for you to discover. These range from the creepy – dolls scurrying across the floor – to the weirdly comical – animated dismembered dancing hands. Finding these rewards you with new Perks that other passive abilities and buffs.

When playing solo these mods feel limited, enabling you

to hold more ammo or extend your health, but in co-op you can think of the team and use area-affect and squad-enabling Perks. It's one of the many moments when *Zombie Army 4* proves it's a game best played with friends as a four-player shared shooter.

While you'll see the credits in around 12 hours there's an incredible amount of replay value to the game. Horde mode is an arcade-perfect wave shooter best played with pals, for example.

Zombie Army 4 may not be the next *Death Stranding*, but it is a fun shot of arcade silliness, a pulpy celebration of cult horror and the art of the well-timed head shot.

VERDICT

Zombie Army 4: Dead War offers few variations on the horde survival template... but what it does, it does it so well. If you love arcade shooters, it's a no-braaaaaaainer. **Ian Dean**

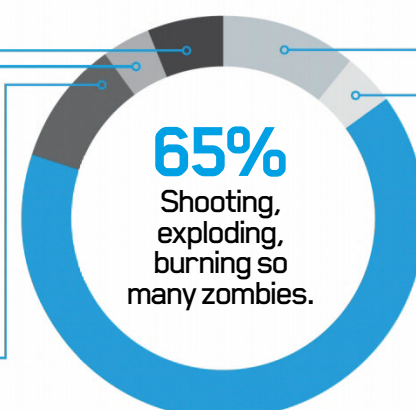
THE OPM BREAKDOWN

WHAT YOU DO IN... ZOMBIE ARMY 4: DEAD WAR

6% Loving the arcade noises coming from the DualShock 4's speaker.

4% Not loving the creepy voices from the speaker when it's left alone.

10% Searching every level for hidden rewards.



11% Mastering the combo system and controlling the horde with a deft use of each weapon's special shot - brilliant.

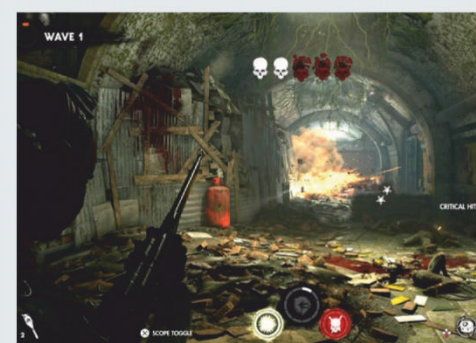
4% Tinkering with the Perks and loadouts to improve your chances of survival.

ALSO ON PLAYSTATION 4 PRO



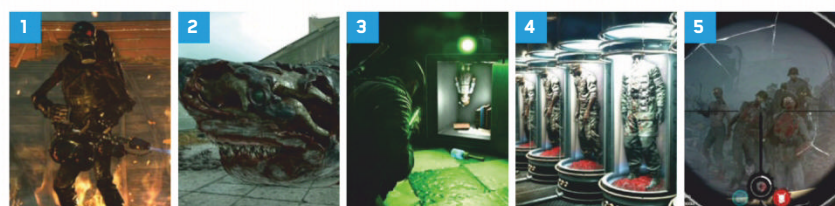
Embracing the power of PS4 Pro, *Zombie Army 4: Dead War* offers two ways to play. Quality mode delivers higher fidelity visuals and a locked 30fps, while Performance mode tones back the graphical effects but ensures a higher number of frames per second.

MULTIPLAYER



The story campaign can be played in four-player co-op, but it's Horde mode that offers long-term party play. Survive waves of zombies across four maps, planning ahead and setting traps to whittle the zombie army. Weekly challenges are planned.

THE FIRST FIVE HOURS...



1 We're escaping Milan's train station when our first heavy arrives. This flamethrower-carrying zombie proves hard work. **2** A zombie shark in Venice? Why not. Shooting it makes it thrash and eat anything nearby. **3** Solving a safe puzzle in Venice we're rewarded with... a creepy porcelain doll. **4** There's a *Wolfenstein* feel to Croatia's bomb factory stage. **5** Midway into the story, the zombie hordes get bigger.

IS IT BETTER THAN?



YES

Playing with a similar deck of cards but poorly dealt, *Strange Brigade* lacks *Zombie Army 4*'s cohesion.



YES

World War Z has one good idea - its massive horde. But sadly poor controls and design let it down.



YES

Equally pulpy and puerile, *Earth Defense Force: Iron Rain* lacks *Zombie Army 4*'s polish and co-op depth.

INFO FORMAT PS4 ETA OUT NOW
PUB KOEI TECMO DEV GUST CO



ATELIER DUSK TRILOGY DELUXE PACK

A cauldron full of crafty adventure

Alchemy is the focus of this long-running JRPG series. Every Atelier sees you bunging ingredients you collect while exploring the world into a pot, then mixing them together to make quest items or tools to use in battle.¹ All the same, Gust always stirs the pot between releases, ensuring each game feels fresh and unique without making the older titles feel outdated.

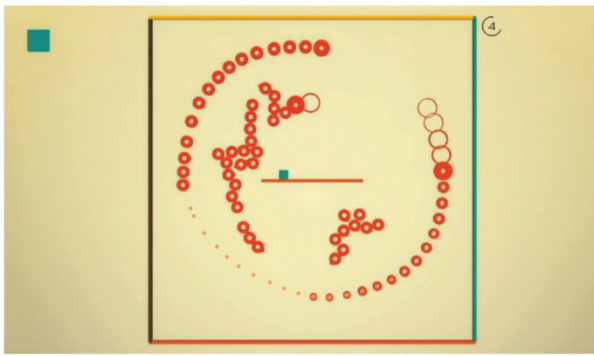
The Dusk Trilogy encompasses the final three games for PS3,² forming a self-contained arc set in the Land Of Dusk where the secrets of a precursor civilisation have been forgotten, and the world is threatened with once again becoming inhospitable. Visually, it's proof that strong art direction can trump realism. While these are in many ways obviously last-generation games, the watercolour-style designs of the characters and environments still pop.

The first two games feature time-based calendar systems within which you must do your alchemy, but once you realise you can clear each section with minimum alchemical exertion you settle into the routine of making friends and improving your alchemy. Each game sends you on a journey of discovery with new lead characters, exploring areas around a hub zone as you unravel the plot and improve your alchemy skills. Creating new items isn't just the purpose of quests, it helps you get stronger so you can explore further afield. It's a satisfying loop that makes you feel in control. Each game offers something unique, and together they're a huge saga that's still well worth playing, and represents Atelier at its most ambitious. **Oscar Taylor-Kent**



FOOTNOTES 1 Battles can be tough, so returning to base to make items is a must. 2 Atelier Ayesha, Atelier Escha & Logy, and Atelier Shallie – the last two feature two characters' stories to pick from.

INFO FORMAT PS4 ETA OUT NOW
PUB DECK13 DEV PARALLEL CIRCLES



FLAT HEROES

Keeping your mind in shape

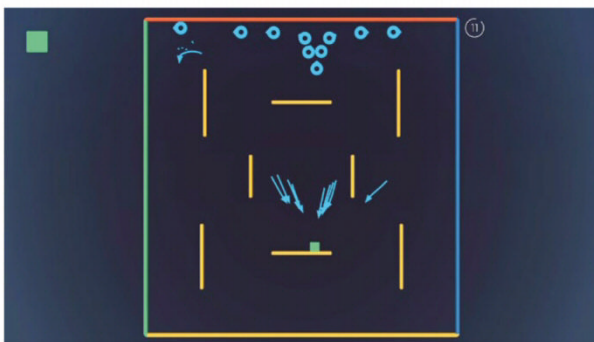
Gameplay is definitely placed before aesthetics in Flat Heroes, conventional distractions like character design, world-building, and even story having been ditched in order to prioritise fast-paced platformer action. You play as a square which has to avoid and/or fight incoming objects. The 300-plus no-frills levels are short, lasting anywhere between 30 seconds and a minute, and once you get into the swing of things, you find yourself either bolting through levels, or repeating one particularly tricky one over and over with a growing sense of frustration.

When everything's focused on the action physics are important, so you'll be glad to know that the platforming feels tight and the controls are intuitive. When you die, you're able to understand what you did wrong, and the fast pace enables you to have another go straight away.

The soundtrack¹ is great to start off with and plays throughout, tracks only ever changing after each piece of music is done – though the limited amount of music there is can grate on your ears after a while. What you're called on to do can also feel repetitive after a while.² You'll get much more enjoyment with a friend in co-op, as figuring out new ways to tackle levels and the thrill at beating a hard level with a friend feel just that much better.

Flat Heroes is great if you want to square off against a friend. Just don't expect it to change your life or linger in your memory. As much as it keeps your brain in shape, the developer hasn't thought too far outside the box for this one. That said, if you're a platformer fan, then be here or be square!

Mahin Kesore



FOOTNOTES 1 The soundtrack is an electronic chiptune with a bit of jazz thrown in. 2 As much as the game can feel repetitive, it still manages to feel repetitive. (At some times it can also be repetitive.)

INFO FORMAT PS4 ETA OUT NOW
PUB CREOTEAM DEV CREOTEAM



FOOTBALL, TACTICS & GLORY

A round peg in square holes

All the best management games of the 1980s came on cassette tapes, usually picked up from your local newsagent for £2.99. Alas you can't slot a cassette tape into your PS4, but FT&G feels like a nod to that era: a game you'd grab alongside a Marathon and four packs of Panini stickers, then enjoy non-stop for an entire school holiday. It offers fictional players in editable teams¹ playing out matches where you control every kick, but in a very different sense to FIFA.

Fixtures take place on a 12x7 square pitch, where your turn lasts three goes: you can dribble, pass, shoot, or move a player with the ultimate objective of scoring in the opponent's net. It's more board game than traditional sports sim.² Dribbling past, or passing through, an opponent triggers a stats-based face-off straight out of an RPG – win it to beat the man, lose it to concede possession. Shooting is similarly tactical, with every player in the line of your shot decreasing the RNG percentages of a goal. Basic in theory. Oh-so-moreish in practice.

Nuance comes from special moves which don't use up one of your three goes (Rainbow feint! Olympic kick!) and the sense of challenge in deciding how to spend in-game credit. Success brings riches, but it's not always wise to splurge it on players – investing £14K in a youth academy limits transfer options, but guarantees a promising youngster every six months. Which sounds like a long wait, yet at seven minutes per match seasons fly by in evenings just like those dugout sims of yore. This time with no threat of the tape wearing out. **Ben Wilson**



FOOTNOTES 1 Fake team names ape classic PES. Look away now, Everton fans – AKA Liverpool Park FC. 2 Looks like a footballing XCOM, plays like the '80s board game Gazza. And yet it works.

Move aside Kratos! Goku and Gohan make for a loving father-son duo.



CHA-LA MEH-CHA-LA

@DaMisanthrope



DRAGON BALL Z: KAKAROT

Shenron or monkey's paw, be careful what you wish for



INFO
 FORMAT PS4
 ETA OUT NOW
 PUB BANDAI NAMCO
 DEV CYBERCONNECT2

There may have been many Dragon Ball Z games over the years, but they've always been fundamentally fighting games. It makes sense, given the series is mostly about big anime lads fighting each other. An action RPG covering the long-running anime up to the Buu saga, then, must read like a dream come true for long-time fans. Dragon Quest but Dragon Ball, if you will.

However the ambition is woefully unfulfilled, most of the open-world RPG elements seemingly just there for the sake of it. From skill trees to stat-raising community boards, there's no real depth as you're never encouraged to engage with any of it. When even the legendary Dragon Balls are reduced to an uninspired fetch quest, you know something's wrong.

That's because the combat these serve is so simplistic. It's similar to the Xenoverse games as you fly around arenas beating the stuffing out of each other by mashing out fists or projectiles. You occasionally need to read your opponent to get the drop on them, but even with a strategy of spamming special attacks, recharging your Ki, then repeating, it's rare to get below an A rank.

CELL DAMAGE

Even when you're sending foes across the screen, it lacks impact. A few thousand HP is rendered

meaningless when bosses are built like super-soaked sponges. For defeated opponents, it all too often follows a cutscene to show that actually, you lost. Conversely, the cutscenes are also where the big pay-offs happen, rendering your actual efforts obsolete.

The visuals do at least look the part. Kakarot is beautifully faithful to its hand-drawn roots, not only recreating many of the show's iconic beats but also keeping up with each character's changes in costume and appearances. The pacing is, however, all over the place: some moments are relegated to a text box summary while others force you to speak to multiple characters with nothing of note to say before the plot can continue.

There are quieter moments to enjoy outside the loud main events, such as a minigame taken from the show's hilarious driving school episode. But when just getting through the

mandatory dialogue can net you more XP than a dozen side-quests or random battles, there's little reason to pursue the optional stuff when it's the very uninspired staple found in other open world games.

DBZ fans will nonetheless find Kakarot a great abridged alternative to reliving the complete saga. But you have to wonder if CyberConnect2 wouldn't have saved time and effort going with a more linear genre than a bloated, half-hearted RPG. Whatever your thoughts on the DBZ warriors' most antagonistic member, Vegeta, when he wraps up one fetch quest calling it an "utter waste of my time", you can't help but agree.

VERDICT

With unimpactful combat, Kakarot isn't the Dragon Ball action RPG fans have been waiting for but still offers a faithful recreation of the most beloved anime series. **Alan Wen**

The green-faced chap is Serafen; the lady with the rifle is animal-loving ranger Maia Rua.



"YOU'RE CHASING A GOD WHO DESTROYED YOUR CASTLE AND ALMOST KILLED YOU."

ORIGINAL PIRATE MATERIAL

@ultrabrilliant

PILLARS OF ETERNITY II: DEADFIRE



A nautical RPG of epic proportions



INFO
FORMAT PS4
ETA OUT NOW
PUB VERSUS EVIL
DEV OBSIDIAN
ENTERTAINMENT

The Deadfire Archipelago is a chain of tropical islands, home to weird creatures, crumbling ruins, dark dungeons, feuding factions, and ancient cultures – and it's all yours to explore. *Pillars Of Eternity II* is a classic fantasy RPG, but with a piratical twist. Commanding your own galleon, you can hop between the islands, and the sense of freedom this gives you is exhilarating.

You don't need to have played all 80-plus hours of the first *Pillars Of Eternity* to understand what's going on. Obsidian's seafaring sequel does a great job of filling you in on past events. All you need to know is that you're a Watcher, a person who can relive the past via the souls of the dead, and you're chasing a god who destroyed your castle and almost killed you.

This is a deeply old-school RPG, with monster battles, dungeon crawling, and thick paragraphs of descriptive text to sift through. But what makes it special is the sheer *density* of the Deadfire Archipelago. There are towns, cities, temples, and jungles strewn across the massive map, all stuffed with interesting characters, twisting quests, and tough moral choices. You'll meet all sorts here, from pirates to royalty.

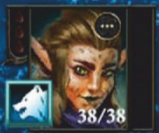
BAND OF BOOTY

Travelling in RPGs is often uneventful, but when you're in charge of a ship there's a lot to do. Your crew, who can be hired from taverns or met while adventuring, will drain your food and water resources. And how you deal with this will affect their morale. Feed them bread and water and they'll quietly resent you, but lavish fruit and rum – which is more expensive – upon them and you'll be the greatest captain who ever lived. >>

083



R2 ACTION BAR



084

Right You begin your adventure on Maje Island – the Defiant is at the beautiful beach of Vilario’s Rest.



Left Turn-based combat is the slower, more methodical, fighting option.

➤ A happy crew will level up faster; an unhappy crew will refuse to work, or even mutiny. You also have other pirates to contend with. Naval combat involves positioning your ship, adjusting your speed, and managing your crew – all through a turn-based, choice-led text interface. Crew members can sustain injuries, so if your veteran helmsman takes a cannonball to the face, you might have to hand the wheel over to a backup crew member... and your cook won’t be quite as skilled at manoeuvring the ship. There are a lot of plates to spin, which adds a nice layer of roleplaying to what is normally just a lot of walking between quests. The ship stuff isn’t terribly atmospheric, though. You never really feel like you’re *there*, battling the elements, sea spray in your face – more like you’re nudging a tiny model galleon around a static map. And keeping the crew happy, the galley stocked, and your cannons loaded can feel like busywork. It’s when you dock at one of the many islands littering the Deadfire Archipelago that the game begins to shine. Obsidian has always been great

at building worlds with a convincing sense of history and place, but this is perhaps its finest work yet. The original game’s setting, the Dyrwood, was pretty familiar fantasy fare: castles, forests, and so on. But this place is much more exotic and alien, with strange architecture, colourful vegetation, ancient sea dragons, and water-shaping priests. **COLONIAL MARINERS** The far corners of the map are lawless, but foreign factions are creeping into the heart of the archipelago, which creates some complex human drama. Pillars Of Eternity II mirrors our own history, specifically the colonisation of the Pacific, with the native Huana threatened by outside forces. Some welcome the change; others fight to protect their way of life. And as the Watcher, you can pick a side in this conflict – or remain neutral if you prefer. Working with one faction can

turn others against you, even closing off entire questlines. Your main objective is tracking down the god who left you for dead, but good luck sticking to it. This is a game filled with distractions, where you can talk to some random dude in a bar and suddenly find yourself fighting evil cultists in a pyramid. And thanks to the colourful, descriptive writing you’re rarely disappointed to be presented with a wall of text. The variety is incredible, from grand, important quests that can determine the fate of the entire archipelago to small, human stories, and moments of slapstick comedy. One quest in particular, set in a fortress called Fort Deadlight, is remarkable, almost like a Hitman level. You have to kill a pirate leader, and there are dozens of creative ways to do it. One of the best things about Pillars Of Eternity II is how it respects the character you’ve created. If you’ve prioritised

“YOU CAN OFTEN TALK YOUR WAY OUT OF TROUBLE WITHOUT FIRING A SHOT.”



Above The world is full of secrets, usually guarded by terrible beasts.



Right These are small dragons, but there are bigger ones. *Much bigger.*



Above You can help the native Huana cling to their traditional way of life.

charisma over combat prowess, you can often talk your way out of trouble without firing a shot.

Alas, you can't avoid combat entirely. There are two flavours of fighting: turn-based and real-time. The former is slower, more methodical; the latter is more immediate, but you can pause at any time to stack up spells and attacks. The combat really sings when you have different classes in your party. Cocky pirate Serafen, a cipher, can penetrate enemies' minds to confuse and terrify them. Xoti, a priest, will back you up with strength buffs and healing. And Tekehu, a chanter, can sing songs to paralyse, weaken, and generally mess with his foes.

TREADING WATER

Pillars Of Eternity II is a great RPG, with superb writing, unpredictable quests, and a fascinating setting. But technically it's pretty scrappy. The menus feel sticky and unresponsive, which is bad

news when you're constantly shuffling items around in your inventories. Character movement doesn't feel especially natural either; a result, no doubt, of its origin as a mouse-and-keyboard PC game. The loading times can be achingly slow. And while the backgrounds are gorgeous, the 3D character models look disappointingly low-res.

But these issues are worth fighting through. This is a roleplaying game in the truest sense, allowing you to create a distinctive character who has a genuine impact on the world around them. The sailing feels half-baked, but still, being able to travel freely, exploring at your own pace, is a delight.

VERDICT

Yes, it's clunky at times, but get past that and you'll find a deep, beautifully written RPG set in a massive world heaving with treasure, monsters, and moral dilemmas. **Andy Kelly**

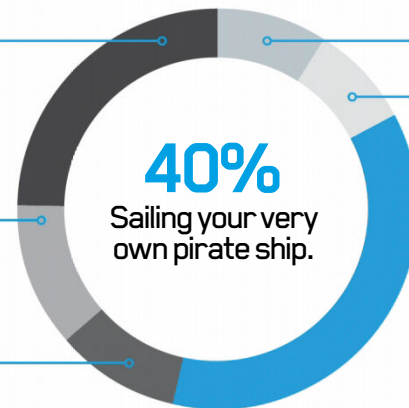
THE OPM BREAKDOWN

WHAT YOU DO IN... PILLARS OF ETERNITY II

27% Chewing over impossible moral choices. Do we need to decide right now?

13% Regretting your decisions as they begin to affect everything.

11% Wrestling with clunky menus.



10% Getting distracted from the main quest.

9% Trying to keep your crew happy with exotic fruit and lots of rum.

STAT PACK

7

Talented (and eccentric) companions to adventure with. Ahoy me hearties!

29

Exotic islands to discover – some of which you get to name – across the archipelago.

70

Powerful spells to scribble into your spell book, from Chill Fog to the lethal Death Ring.

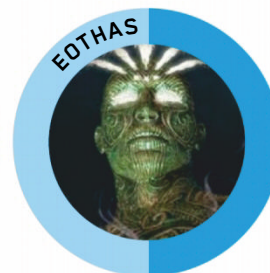
1

Massive capital city. It's called Neketaka and filled with quests, NPCs, and secrets.

FRIENDS & ENEMIES



This Wild Orlan is a veteran pirate with deadly, mental powers.

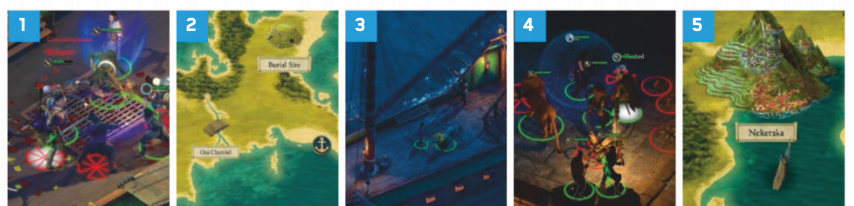


He left you for dead. You want revenge. But can you kill a god?



Your chill farmer friend who's also pretty nifty with a longsword.

THE FIRST FIVE HOURS ...



1 Pirates attacked then sunk my ship. I am not happy. **2** Shipwrecked on a strange island. The locals don't seem to want me here. I need to get my ship repaired. **3** Yarr! My ship is fixed and I've set sail. I'm a pirate now. A proper pirate with my own galleon. Hand over the booty. **4** Wait, how did I end up in this dungeon? All I did was talk to some random dude in a tavern. **5** Crew hates me. I really need to get them some rum.

IS IT BETTER THAN?



YES

The seafaring freedom of the sequel makes for a more satisfying roleplaying experience than the first game.



NO

Larian's reactive world feels more alive, giving you more interesting ways to complete quests.



YES

Obsidian's foul-mouthed take on South Park is loads of fun, but Deadfire is its best work to date.

INFO FORMAT PS4 ETA OUT NOW PUB ROCKETPUNCH GAMES DEV ROCKETPUNCH GAMES



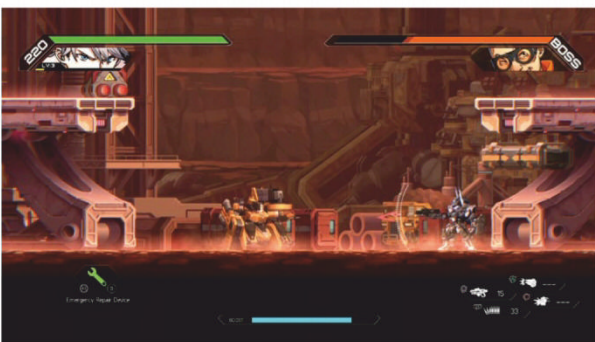
HARDCORE MECHA

Go ahead punk. Mech my day!

Think the title of this anime-infused 2D action platformer sounds like a Saturday morning kids' TV show? Rest easy: that's the vibe it's going for. Placing you in the shoes of an elite mercenary able to pilot the eponymous Hardcore Mecha, the act of boosting, shooting, and gut-punching your way through hordes of cyber-enemies never ceases to be satisfying – and it's made all the more epic by an inherently charming SD art style.¹

This is the perfect example of an indie shoot-'em-up that knows not to bite off more than it can chew, delivering all the punchiness and kineticism of, say, Dragonball via its cutscenes² before letting you loose across a fun, and often challenging, eight-part campaign. Hardcore Mecha isn't short on ideas either, introducing mechanical challenges at least once per chapter. One area, for instance, takes place with your guy on foot, tasking you to sneak past guards (or kill them quietly) before culminating in a Power-Rangers-style mech-vs-mech battle.

What could feel monotonous after a while doesn't, largely due to the ability to upgrade and level up your Mecha in between stages. Want to sacrifice your aim assist for the ability to start with a repair device? Do it. It's surprising just how tailorable Hardcore Mecha is, with additional weapons, melee abilities, and enemy-devastating 'Ultimate Skills' all there to be slotted in. Such customisation even translates to Hardcore Mecha's multiplayer mode, where you can duke it out with another person's mech either locally or online. The result is an incredibly robust package, and the ultimate small-scale homage to robot anime. **Aaron Potter**



FOOTNOTES 1 This is RocketPunch Games' debut, one of several titles in Sony's China Hero Project. **2** Cutscenes match the fast-paced action, boasting quick camera pans and swooping shots.

INFO FORMAT PS4 ETA OUT NOW PUB SQUARE ENIX DEV CHERRYMOCHI



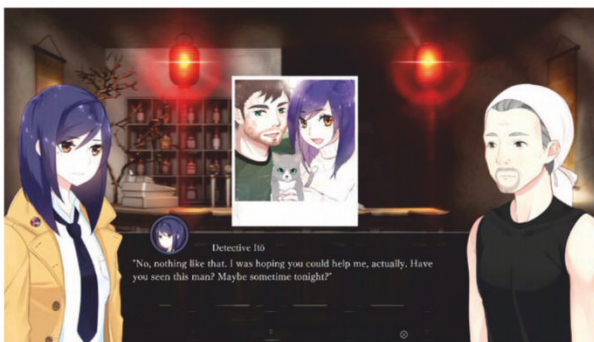
TOKYO DARK: REMEMBRANCE

Murder She Spoke

This 2D point-and-click adventure is built around a supernatural whodunnit. You play as Detective Ito Ayami, an experienced investigator searching for her missing partner, Detective Kazuki Tanaka. As Ito explores Tokyo's sleazy back streets, she's confronted with what seems like an unsolvable mystery. Battling her inner demons,¹ Ito's sanity begins to waver as she barter with Tokyo's criminal class for information. It's your job to choose which NPCs to interact with and, through dialogue and action choices, to decide which approach will get Ito the evidence she needs. The game autosaves after every decision, so you'd better get it right first time.

As Ito uncovers a twisted conspiracy, her perception of the world around her changes.² To remain of sound mind, you must manage Ito's sanity, professionalism, investigative skills, and neurosis. These metrics alter based on every choice you make. For example, having a drink on the job might help loosen a few tongues and get Ito a vital clue, but it will also lower your professionalism stat. It's an excellent system that means you must think out each decision carefully. With multiple endings to the story, the unique decisions you make will determine how Ito's investigation ends.

Perhaps the only downside to Tokyo Dark is the amount of text present in comparison to gameplay. There is a lot of talking, to the point where it verges on visual novel territory, and more interactivity with other aspects of the world would have helped prevent this. If you don't mind a bit of reading, though, this is a gripping and stylish whodunnit. **Rebecca Stow**



FOOTNOTES 1 In true anime detective style, Ito struggles with a terrible trauma in her past. **2** In genre terms, there is more than a little horror sprinkled throughout this murder mystery.

INFO FORMAT PS4 ETA OUT NOW PUB TOGE PRODUCTIONS DEV TOGE PRODUCTIONS



COFFEE TALK

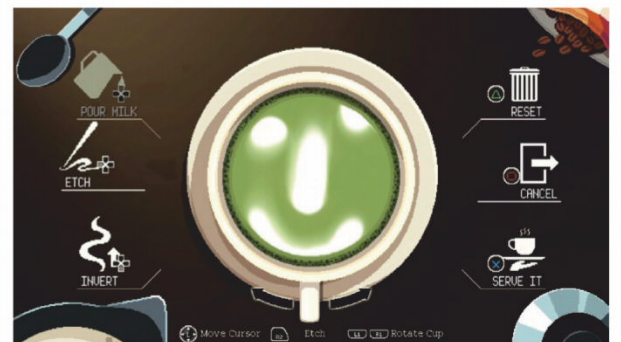
Veni, vidi, venti

There's a certain appeal to games that thrive on stressing you out, but this provides a much-needed refreshment break. It serves an engaging story with barista-based action, as you follow the daily (well, nightly) routine of a café, learning about the regulars and mixing ingredients to provide them with delicious beverages as you help them sort out their lives.¹ The simple narrative is enriched with fantasy elements, and the inclusion of elves, orcs, and more definitely spices things up.

Your ingredients span only two shelves, which might not seem like many to choose from, but it ensures a decent number of combinations, with the sequence you add things in often having an effect on the outcome. There's enough variety in orders that it's not at all as repetitive as it might sound, and the game doesn't punish you for making mistakes, so you don't need to worry about any particularly tricky requests.

Though the dialogue can be a bit ham-fisted and overly meta in places, the cast is personable and the script shows a good sense of humour, though the writers aren't afraid to get deeper or touch on darker themes. It also perfectly nails that relaxing coffee shop vibe.² Despite not being very long, each character's subplot comes to a satisfying conclusion, and there are even a few sneaky twists. If the brevity leaves you thirsty for more there's an Endless option, where you can experiment to discover your missing menu items in Free Brew or put your skills to the test in Challenge mode.

While this doesn't push any boundaries, it's great to curl up with for a few hours on a cold day, just like a good cup of... you know. **Max Williams**



FOOTNOTES 1 You can add latte art to some orders – it's harder than it looks! **2** The 'lo-fi hip-hop beats to solve people's problems to' soundtrack definitely adds to the atmosphere.



RUCK'S SAKE

@benjiwilson

RUGBY 20

Much improved, but still some way off egg-cellent



087



For years this publication bemoaned the lack of quality PS4 games focused on niche sports, but in recent months Cricket 19 and AO Tennis 2 (see p92) have addressed those complaints, and quashed them in some style. Which is reason enough to raise hopes of some oval-ball goodness being drop-goaled into your life. Alas, that goodness does not come in the shape of Rugby 20.

To give developer Eko Software some credit, this is a leap forwards from unfathomably bad predecessor Rugby 18. Its action is still too heavily based around rucking, but the scrum mechanic is novel (both sticks down to crouch, shoulder buttons to engage, both sticks up to push) and set-pieces work tidily when timed correctly, your scrum half whipping the ball to his outside centre, then reversing to the inside centre, with perfectly timed taps of **L1** then **R1**.

Jonah Lomu Rugby remains famed for its PS1 excellence, and the best bits of this game are when it apes that classic, whether by accident or design: working the ball out to your winger for him to race down the flank and score a try in the corner, or perfectly timing a chip and

chase to set yourself up downfield. Sadly, while it has masses more teams than that demigod of PlayStation egg-chasers (56 across four club competitions, plus 20 national sides) attributes other than pace feel meaningless, rendering its myriad licences much of a muchness.

BATH MAUL

Indeed, presentation is a major shortcoming. Commentary from Nick Mullins and Ben Kay is repetitive and stilted, with words stitched together like a first-year student experimenting in Audacity. Stadiums look reasonable but lack atmosphere in terms of both noise and crowd animations, and there's little pizzazz to differentiate Bath vs Exeter in the English Premiership from New Zealand vs Australia on the international scene. In this kind of sim such details are important, which is one of the reasons those aforementioned cricket and tennis titles are yet to reach top-tier status.

Rugby 20 also demonstrates on-field woes which hold it back like a blatant collar pull. Forward play just isn't powerful enough, or particularly effective – mauling downfield is good fun but only possible to trigger once or twice per game. Kicking feels preposterously arcadey, with long punts fired off even while mid-sprint, defending is a mess, and the passing game turns soupy when everyone is around a ruck (ie constantly). As for line-outs: they work fine, but are entirely joyless.

A league mode and Ultimate-Team-inspired card-collecting system in theory add depth, but the rugby itself isn't varied or realistic enough to keep you coming back. For a 5/10 game, Rugby 20 is curiously likeable. But to call it 'good' would be as wrong as cauliflower ears.

VERDICT

Overall this is unimpressive, yet oddly playable through all its flaws. Still, the agonising wait for a formidable rugby game on PS4 goes on. Anyone for tennis? **Ben Wilson**

"STILL TOO HEAVILY BASED AROUND RUCKING, BUT THE SCRUM MECHANIC IS NOVEL."

"MAKE YOUR WAY FROM FIELDS OF ICE
TO A LUSH JUNGLE FULL OF SPIKY
PLANTS TO CRACKLING LAVA PITS."



Get attached to AR-Y 26. Literally. Because you can grapple all over it.



BIRD PUFFING

@MrOscarTK



JOURNEY TO THE SAVAGE PLANET

New science at the end of a shiny blaster



INFO
FORMAT PS4
ETA OUT NOW
PUB 505 GAMES
DEV TYPHOON STUDIOS

Welcome to AR-Y 26. You've been shot off into space (along with an optional co-op partner) in a banged-up spaceship in order to assess whether this planet is fit for civilisation. Unfortunately, the landing leaves your fuel canisters empty, and you've got next to no equipment – only a 3D printer that requires materials to print new gear. Good luck!

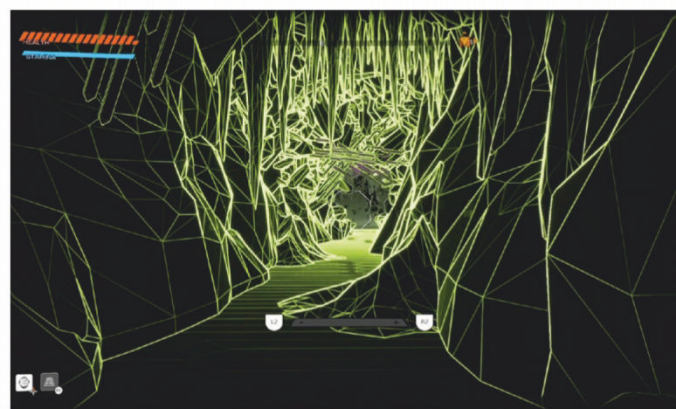
If you thought this was a survival game from the setup then fair enough, though you'd be wrong. Your task here is exploration. As you investigate your surroundings you realise the environment is filled with nooks and crannies hiding things like orange goo (which you unwisely gobble up to increase health and stamina), alien alloys (for crafting the best gear), and alien artefacts (which fill out more of the planet's backstory).

STAR TREKKING

The planet looks gorgeous and suitably alien. You make your way from fields of ice to a lush jungle full of spiky plants to crackling lava pits and a red, mushroom-filled forest. All these environments are on cracked islands floating in the atmosphere, loosely connected and surrounding a mysterious grey tower covered in foreboding skulls. Beyond repairing your ship and scanning as many samples as possible, your goal quickly becomes to investigate this tower, find a way inside, and figure out just what it's there for. >>



Right Bosses light the way to their own defeats with glowing weak spots. Evolution gone wrong.



Left No it's not a PC game from the '90s, Scan View is just delightfully polygonal.

➤ Its door is, however, sealed. Your quest for a way to open it leads you to explore each area, scanning more of your surroundings and collecting material to print new gear. You can make everything from bigger utility belts to carry more things to items that give you new abilities, such as a grappling hook or a bombgranate stabiliser (which enables you to store the exploding fruit — without it you have to pick and hurl them within a few seconds). You can also print upgrades for your gun so it's capable of new blast modes, your visor to scan for secrets, and your backpack so you can perform extra double jumps and thrust boosts.

Because of the tower, your exploratory journey consistently takes you further upwards, which means quite a bit of first-person platforming — and annoyance if you fall down. It's fiddly, but rarely too annoying or punishing, especially after you level up your backpack. A mantle system means you can pull yourself up onto ledges just in front of you, though in many cases this doesn't work when you feel like it should, so you

spend a lot of time second-guessing yourself.

Exploring AR-Y 26 is more fun with a friend (I enjoy it once I tear Jess away from taking a knee at every shiny object we pass, anyway). As long as you're in the same zone, you're free to stick together or branch out in the large environments as much as you like. But oddly, as the bulk of the game is about uncovering secrets, you can't help feeling like you're missing out on the half of the game your friend is finding on the other side of the map.

EKO LOCATION

Often key traversal upgrades require a unique alien element to craft, which means diverting your journey to visit the alien shrines your AI partner, EKO, finds for you. But watch out: helpful as she is, EKO's also sassy in that way that goofy robots often are. However, as she makes some quite wry

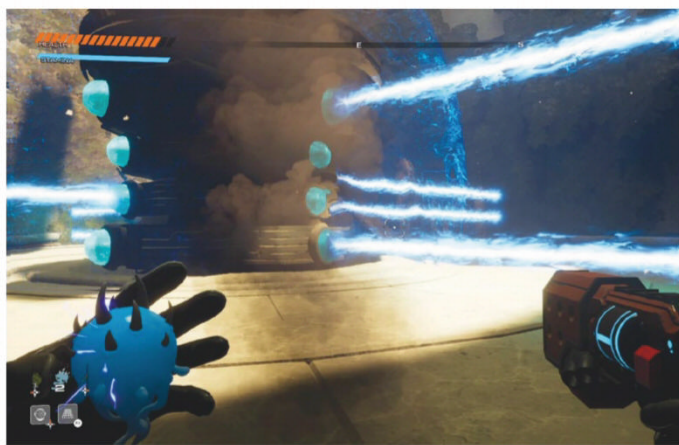
statements and doesn't repeat herself too often, she's a fun addition and gives a nice, chatty atmosphere to a game that would otherwise be very subdued (aside from the great music that kicks in at more action-heavy points). You can adjust how often she talks in the options, too.

Another welcome presence is that of zany, over-the-top capitalist Martin Tweed. You see quite a few of his live-action video messages over the course of the game. Actor Adrian Burhop's dry delivery is perfect for these corporate stock video parodies. His performance sets a bar for humour that the rest of the game doesn't manage to clear. Some of the scanned information on the world around you is chuckle-worthy, but there's a surprising amount of straightforward text in the journal. There's an odd clashing of tones throughout, and the promise of the corporate parody

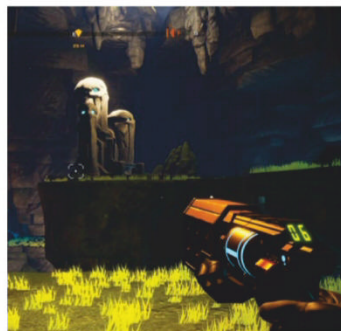
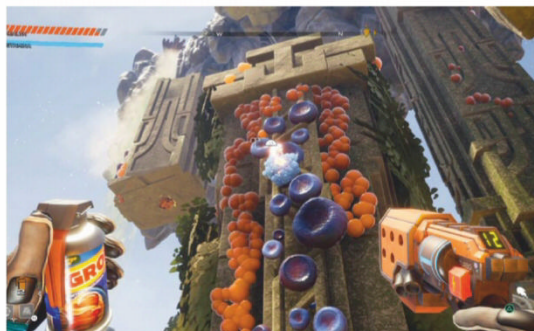
"A WELCOME PRESENCE IS THAT OF ZANY, OVER-THE-TOP CAPITALIST MARTIN TWEED."



Above We don't burn with passion for strong enemies – dodging them is annoying.



Right Shocking reveal: there are zaptastic platforming challenges.



Above Nature looks after you, providing glow-in-the-dark plants and seeds.

is never really delivered on. Savage Planet has the feel of a humorous game without being one; it has a zany tone yet often lacks anything actively funny. It rarely surprises in the way good comedy often can.

LIVE, DIE, REPEAT

There's a discrepancy between your 'scientific' mission and your distinctly unscientific approach (mostly shooting things), but it doesn't really make you laugh. In fact, you'll probably wish there was less blasting. Thanks to finicky movement that makes it difficult to move precisely and enemies that frequently jump around from in front of you and require precise shooting at their weak points it often feels cumbersome. That's not to mention tiers of upgrades locked behind 'scientific levels' – these require you to complete side-missions, meaning you have to search for groups of enemies to pull off

specific tasks like exploding a flying enemy so it damages two others, or killing three enemies at once with a particular weapon. It's somewhat dull.

While Journey To The Savage Planet presents you with new environments and gadgets, once the novelty wears off you realise you're mostly doing the same thing you were doing at the start of the game. The world feels densely strewn with rewards, but the ways you explore it are limited. Oh, something hidden in long grass again... in another cave... or in yet one more chest. There's plenty to love about the game – it's a fun, short but sweet explore-'em-up – but we wish it had shot for the stars more.

VERDICT

There's so much Savage Planet gets right: it's slick, gorgeous, and dense with things to do. However, for all the exploration, much of the action feels quite samey. **Oscar Taylor-Kent**

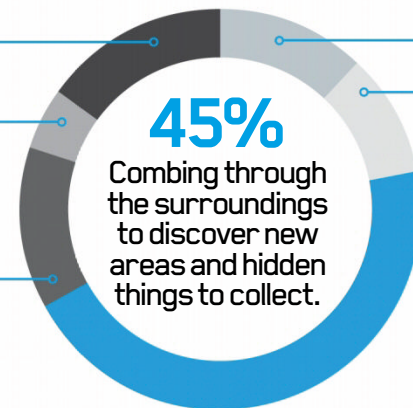
THE OPM BREAKDOWN

WHAT YOU DO IN... SAVAGE PLANET

15% Blasting away with your pistol and upgrading it.

5% Trying to figure out just how to get to a hidden item.

13% Getting irritated at the stiff momentum in the first-person platforming.



12% Kicking innocent pufferbirds and feeling a bit guilty about it.

10% Chuckling at the video messages from the sinister yet zany Martin Tweed.

STAT PACK

82

Percentage of AR-Y 26 explored by the time we hit credits. Time to jump back in for the rest.

11

Deaths during our adventure to the tower (most of them from falling from too high).

190

Different things to scan on the planet, including creatures, plants, alien tech, and more.

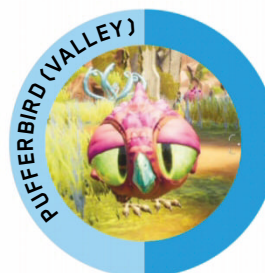
44

Upgrades for your suit and gear, including the few items you start out with.

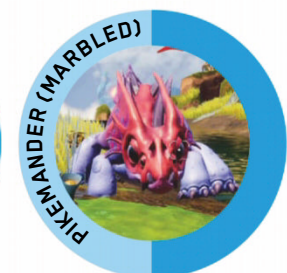
FRIENDS & ENEMIES



The goofy CEO of Kindred Aerospace, who gave you your mission.

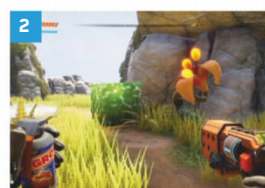
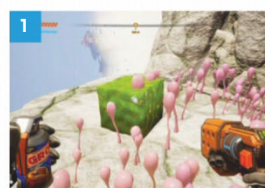


Various types inhabit AR-Y 26. Peaceful unless provoked.



This predator is invulnerable everywhere except its tail.

HOW TO... GET TREASURE FROM A CUBE



1 Osmotic cubes contain alien alloys, which you need to print out the best upgrades. They're impervious to damage, so once you find one, kick it towards other objects or enemies. **2** The cubes love to consume shiny things, you see, which means it will slurp up materials dropped by enemies you've killed or things like seeds or pellets from a vitality plant. **3** Once it's consumed enough materials, the cube will swell up and eventually explode, leaving you to collect the alloy you need.

TROPHY CABINET



BRONZE

Die and respawn a brand-new you from your spaceship's cloning machine for this one.



SILVER

Eat all the dubious-looking orange goo you can find to level up your stats and earn this 'reward'.



GOLD

Simply grab every upgrade possible from the 3D printer to 3D-print yourself this shiny trophy.



Rafael Nadal and Nick Kyrgios head AO2's male roster, while Ashleigh Barty fronts the female lineup.



DEUCES WILD

@BenjiWilson



AO TENNIS 2

The net big thing in PlayStation sports



FORMAT PS4
ETA OUT NOW
PUB BIGBEN INTERACTIVE
DEV BIG ANT STUDIOS

AO Tennis' release in 2018 was met by widespread criticism of the fact that it wasn't Top Spin or Virtua. What many missed in making lazy comparisons to past greats is that it was pretty good on its own terms, establishing sound fundamentals in areas like serving, player movement, and varied baseline play. It lacked the gloss of a FIFA or NHL, sure, but there was promise.

Here that promise bears fruit. AO2's basics again make it a pick-up-and-play gem, with responsive serves and lobs and slices and a control system that enables player movement, shot power, and ball direction to work together seamlessly – a necessity for this particular pastime. Net-play feels a touch fiddlier, especially in doubles matches (where your player occasionally fails to respond at all), but overall it's solid dog-toy-thwacking fun. New animations and improved ball physics also upgrade things from last time out, though you'd expect those from any sporting sequel.

Longevity comes via a fairly traditional career mode where you control and power up either an existing pro or a player of your own creation. Tournament, tournament, rest week, tournament:

"NET PLAY IS A TOUCH FIDDLY, BUT OVERALL THIS IS SOLID DOG-TOY-THWACKING FUN."

its structure is typical but there's a neat level of detail to its micromanagement. Upgrading your class of flights reduces fatigue between matches, for example, while employing a doctor enables you to recover faster from injury, and hiring an assistant improves your form. Throw in sponsored rackets and clothing and there's plenty to play for.

AO, LET'S GO

It's all good, if hardly groundbreaking, but AO does also pack happy surprises that up the aforementioned gloss factor. Multiple-choice press conferences and the option to request a doubles partner flesh out career mode, while all areas of the game benefit from medical timeouts, umpire challenges, and gameplay sliders. Want a more arcade-style experience? Turn stamina off and push ball speed and game speed up to 100. Neat.

As with fellow Big Ant title Cricket 19, AO's truly ingenious element is its creation suite and community sharing system.

Andy Murray and Roger Federer aren't in the game... except they are, because fans have made and shared them. Aside from inevitable visual limitations and the need to keep names clean, there's theoretically no limit on who can be made, so the scope for fantasy contests between past and present greats is endless. It's easy to spend more time cycling through creations than actually playing the game.

Yet when you do play, it's mostly great. You won't be doing so day after day, month after month – there's little meat outside career mode – but AO is a sim you'll leap into whenever the mood suits, such as during Wimbledon, and thoroughly enjoy. It's PS4's best racket swinger. Faint praise, perhaps, but praise nonetheless.

VERDICT

Less polished than PS4's big-money sporting contingent, AO2 nonetheless pleases thanks to user-friendly controls, cute details and a clever creation-sharing mechanic. **Ben Wilson**

INFO FORMAT PS VR ETA OUT NOW
PUB VITRUVIUSVR DEV VITRUVIUSVR



PS VR REVIEW

TAKES ALL SWORDS

@Jim_Crikey

SHADOW LEGEND VR

Come for the combat, stay for the animals

Only in PS VR could we play as a heroic pair of gloves and still take things seriously. Or, at least, as seriously as the game allows. For while only seeing the dismembered hands of your character is a common and bizarre side-effect of playing in VR, it slots smoothly into the playful world created by the developer here.

After a brief tutorial, you are given a sword by your friend the blacksmith. Now, come on; you're going to hit him with it, aren't you? Of course you are. VitruviusVR knows you are. This is why doing so produces a few scratches - but nothing more - on his face as he continues the conversation.

You then enter a small courtyard dense with things to do, a perfect example of what Shadow Legend VR is and what it wants to achieve. Although a very small area, the sheer number of things to discover produces the illusion of space, a trick used throughout the game. Use a bow and arrow! Climb ladders! *Pet a dog and feed it dog treats!* Cook a steak, feed carrots to the horses, seek out collectible runes... there's plenty to play around with.

MY CHERIE ARMOUR

Combat works brilliantly thanks to PS Move. It can be a wigglegest if you like, but it's

much more satisfying to use the system as intended. You don't have a shield (though you can later buy weapons such as magical staves), instead using your sword to land and deflect bows. Combined with full 3D movement, it can at times feel like the PS VR adventure you've always dreamed of.

On a similar note, elements taken from traditional games help beef up the experience. You can indulge your kleptomania with a whole new level of immersion, swiping coins from tables and emptying chests of their valuables. There are floating platform sections (that work surprisingly well), and a few bosses too.

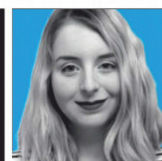
It's not quite a perfect implementation of virtual reality, though. Motion tracking works wonderfully, but if you're playing close to the TV, reaching down to interact with things on the ground can be hilariously difficult (we had to reposition ourselves) and using a bow a little tricky. It's only a few hours long, too. The good far outweighs the bad, however, and the charmingly cheesy script and acting seal the deal on a highly enjoyable interactive B-movie.

VERDICT

Brief though it is, Shadow Legend VR is stuffed with an amount of joy and enthusiasm many games can only dream of. It's a hell of a knight. **Luke Kemp**



LAST MONTH ON PS PLUS



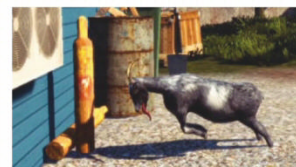
@KoenigKatze

You know what they say: New year, old-new adventures. Well, someone somewhere says that. We think. We finished 2019 by looking back and declaring Uncharted 2: Among Thieves our top game of the decade. January's PS Plus lineup suggests it's only right we begin as we mean to go on.



Last month's headline act was **UNCHARTED: THE NATHAN DRAKE COLLECTION**. That's

Uncharted: Drake's Fortune, Uncharted 2: Among Thieves, and Uncharted 3: Drake's Deception all in one shiny PS4 package. Chances are, you already have some of Naughty Dog's finest cinematic action in your collection. However, if you're anything like me, you've never actually played it and this is the perfect opportunity to get round to it. Talk about being late to the party - but it's better to be late than not turn up at all, right? The trilogy has, much like lead voice actor Nolan North, aged like a fine wine.



As for things that have instead aged like smelly cheese left out too long,

we turn to January's second offering.

GOAT SIMULATOR is like Destruction Derby by way of a petting farm. That sounds messy, but even that doesn't really begin to cover this slapstick affair in which you play a goat with a thirst for mayhem. Hurling yourself at whatever or whoever may be unlucky enough to be nearby, you can ragdoll your way to high scores and at least one very silly story to tell whenever the game comes up in conversation. Judging by the game's current trajectory, maybe twice a decade is looking a little hopeful.

It's not exactly as no-brainer a pairing as cheese and wine (and definitely nowhere near as fancy) but last month's lineup definitely had broad appeal. We don't doubt the year ahead will have plenty more blasts from the past, oddly appealing critters, and definitely way more than one unexpected combo.



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network

online dreams dlc & live games movies streaming



online tests

96

Star Wars Battlefront II: Celebration Edition

The latest expansion means we're finally getting the Star Wars battle game we've been dreaming of

this month



in dreams

98 Build a spaceship

Go through a design phase, a refinement phase, and a finish phase to create a spaceship that looks ready to take off to new worlds.



on the store

102 Street Fighter V: Champion Edition

Upgrade or buy the edition complete to ensure you're playing the version that packs the biggest punch.



on home

104 Joker

Stepping away from the classic origin story to deliver a powerful portrait of a man on the edge.



streaming now

105 This month's hottest shows

online tests

MULTIPLAYER MODES PUT
THROUGH THEIR PACES
BY OUR TEAM OF EXPERTS

WHAT WE'RE PLAYING NOW



APEX LEGENDS

Jess Kinghorn finally caught her idol's eye

He is style, he is grace and I'll never get tired of that face: It's Mirage! And he *definitely* tweeted at me specifically and not just whoever liked a series of recent Mirage-centric posts from the official account. Anyway, after

that it almost seemed rude not to check out season three. I don't much care for the FOMO battle passes inspire but, while Fortnite was off contemplating the void, I did appreciate Respawn all but going, "Well, we've already had dinosaurs so, next season... LET'S JUST MAKE EVERYTHING REALLY HOT!" Oh, but you were hot enough already, Apex!



PINBALL FX3

Has Oscar Taylor-Kent got the balls to play?

The allure of a bite-sized reprieve from work with a quick round of pinball is strong, but inevitably spirals into 'just one more go'. I've fallen for the new Tales Of The Arabian Nights table, a recreation of the classic Williams

original. Mainly because of the table feature that has you spinning Aladdin's lamp in order to rack up points and wishes. Will I be able to score enough spins to raise my leaderboard rank into triple digits from quadruple? Not yet, but maybe if I make a wish...



TITANFALL 2

Ian Dean rediscovers his mech-mojo

We're in 2020 and Titanfall 2 is still a thing online. This surprised me, even more so than when I discovered Killzone Shadow Fall still had a community. As I venture back into Respawn's mech-shooter it's not as

daunting as I'd imagined. After all, everyone in here has had five years to get good and I'm struggling to remember the button layout from a game I dropped back when Justin Bieber was singing Sorry to the world, for being Justin Bieber. It helps there are more newcomers since the game dropped on PS Plus in December, giving me time to relearn *that* grapple.

REVIEW



Star Wars Battlefront II: Celebration Edition

Ewok party like it's 1983

Scores are tricky things. When this follow-up to DICE's first literal Star Wars warfighter launched, we weren't pleased with its barebones game modes and progression system. But that was 2017. More than two years of updates and listening to the community have culminated in the Celebration Edition. It's the Star Wars battle game we all wanted it to be at launch.

You can upgrade to the Celebration Edition from the base game or buy it as a standalone. It gives you access to hundreds of character skins, voice lines, and emotes, so you can set things how you want, whether that's having Obi-Wan gesture 'hello there', or loading up Lando to rock the Donald Glover look from Solo. Battlefront II is a real

celebration of the series, a curated museum of content to blast away in.

FORCING IT

Own Battlefront II and don't want to spring for this edition? You'll still have access to all the free updates to the core game, as well as the ones yet to come. These range from the likes of

the Clone Wars updates from a while back to areas from the recent film trilogy, Rise Of Skywalker in particular.

The Battlefield-style gameplay now covers Ajan Kloss, the latest movie's jungle planet, plus other locations from the films. The likes of Rey and Kylo Ren feature more heavily in the action

A REAL CELEBRATION OF THE SERIES, A CURATED MUSEUM OF CONTENT TO BLAST AWAY IN.



2020 VISION

It's taken a while for Battlefront II to reach its Jedi potential, but free updates are planned through 2020. After that, will we get PS5 space wars? Believe in the Force.



as heroes you can spawn as once you've earned enough battle points, and there are stronger units like the new jet troopers to provide aerial support and Sith troopers to, well, Sith it up.

These maps and characters are part of a wealth of game modes filled with players, so there's always something to jump into. Heroes And Villains has four to eight players duking it out as hero characters; assault modes have up to 40 players in multi-stage battles from the movies or piloting ships in complete starfighter skirmishes; and Operations provides unique modes like Ewok Hunt, a genuinely terrifying experience that has Ewoks using traps to mop up Stormtroopers in the dead of night. There's masses to do, and the gameplay is simple enough to ensure you always feel like you can hop back in and have a blast. And what's more Star Wars than that?

VERDICT

Star Wars is about, well, star wars, and Battlefront II finally feels like the complete package for experiencing that for yourself, no matter which films are your faves. **Oscar Taylor-Kent**



Touring Karts

We kart believe this one's not better

INFO

FORMAT PS4, PS VR
PUB IVANOVICH GAMES
DEV IVANOVICH GAMES
REVIEW N/A

Go-karting is cool. PS VR (which is optional here) is cool. So why, when the two come together in this way, do we feel like it's more of a car crash than a dream ride? After all, the game ticks some promising boxes: up to eight players in an online race; a new mini-tournament, consisting of a few randomly chosen tracks, every day; hazards including a giant monkey and a huge, very angry slice of pizza.

For one thing, the greatest challenge is finding somebody else to race online (though it can be done on very rare occasions). For another, it's a rather dull experience, with mostly flat tracks and bots that tend to cause massive pile-ups that ruin any sense of fun. You'd best steer clear – like everybody else.

VERDICT

It looks good in PS VR, but still not good enough to justify spending hours trying to find another player to snore your way through a race with. **Luke Kemp**



Mini Motor Racing X

This motor's a right little goer, with or without VR

INFO

FORMAT PS4, PS VR
PUB THE BINARY MILL
DEV THE BINARY MILL
REVIEW N/A

You may not be racing across cluttered tabletops and through oversized gardens, but this game's default overhead view and simple yet demanding gameplay puts us in mind of Micro Machines' heyday (in much the same way as the last Micro Machines game didn't). Combine the optional PS VR with the closest view, and it even becomes a pretty good go-kart simulator.

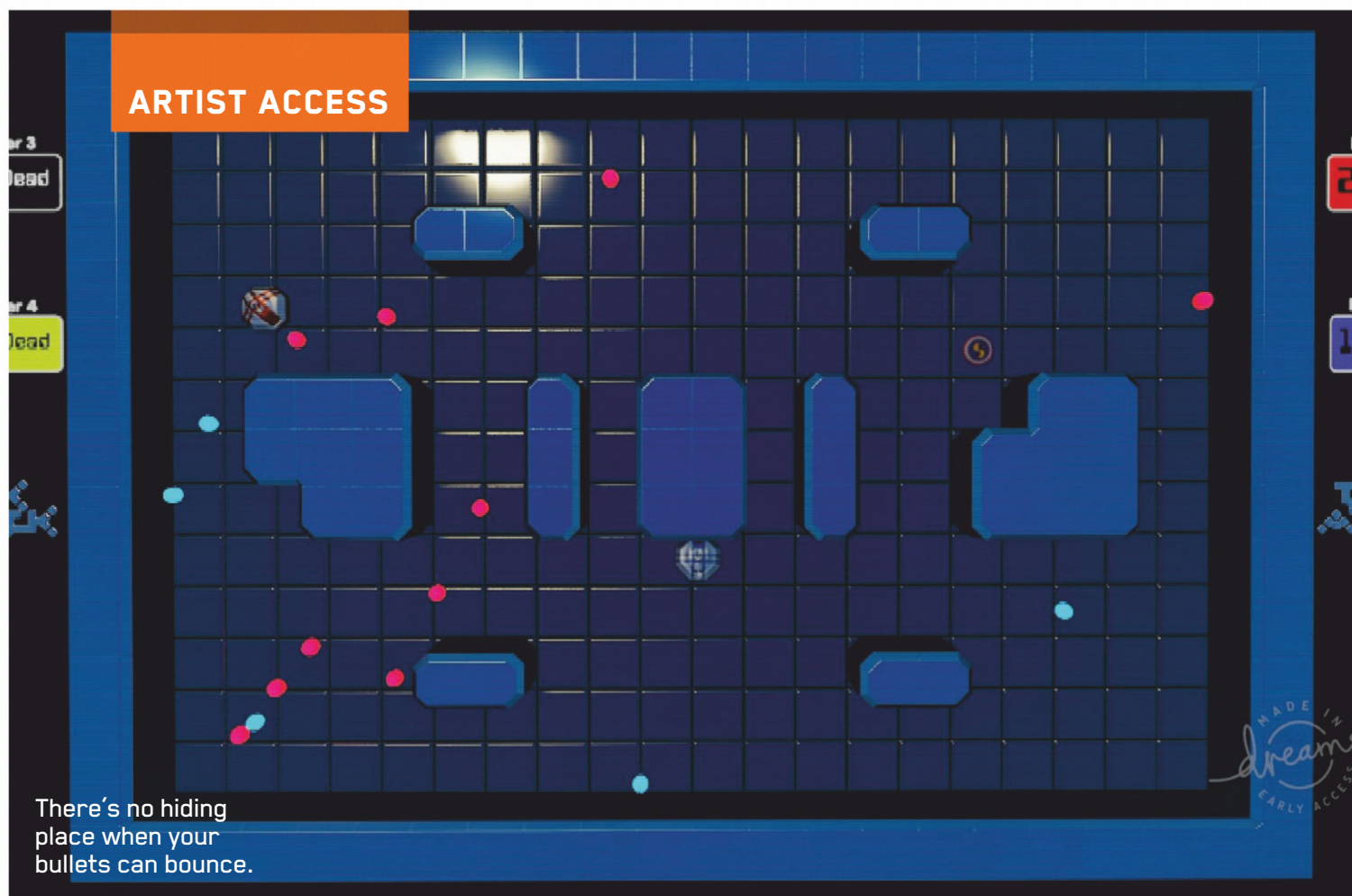
Online supports up to four players at once, though we could never find more than one at a time. Players are few and far between, something the developer has anticipated by allowing you to play solo while waiting for a race to be found. It's worth persevering, as online races can be surprisingly tense at times, whether you opt to play with or without weapons.

VERDICT

Intuitive, and open to suitably bite-sized play sessions, Mini Motor Racing X deserves a far bigger online community than it currently has. **Luke Kemp**

In dreams

GAMES, ART, MUSIC,
AND MORE MADE BY
YOU FOR EVERYONE



There's no hiding place when your bullets can bounce.

BEST OF THE DREAMVERSE

GAME



SLIDEOUT 3019

Creator Gauffreman's homage to WipEout is an impressive Dreams game. It opens with a slick set of menus straight out of Sony's racer, but it's the pace of the actual game and recreation of the series' airbrakes that really impresses. We'd love to see more.

GAME



TAKEN BY THE RUST - PART 1

Realism is hard to create, particularly in Dreams, but Badrobo82 has managed to sculpt some impressive trees to emulate the textures we normally find in games. That there's an engaging Myst-like adventure in here too is even more impressive. The Rust has us!

ART



TWITTER ARTISTS ORIGINALS

Character modeller Kai Frazier has been busy creating this series of incredible original and fan art characters in Dreams for his series Twitter Artist Originals (TAO). As well as new creations he's also sculpted Sack Boy, Sonic, Knuckles, and Kid Goku. Follow him on @kaifraz4048.

Dreams is a blast

Tank Attack takes inspiration from the past in the best way

There are some amazing games being created in Dreams, and more to come after 14 Feb when the 'game' is finally released properly, but Tank Attack by Christopher Kirk ate up our time this month with its retro simplicity as up to four players scuttle around a one-screen maze trying to kill one another. Power-ups, including a game-turning invisibility buff, offer the upper hand to those who reach them.

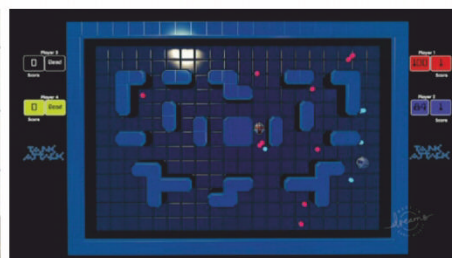
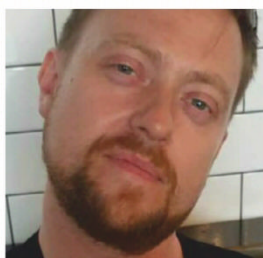
MORE IN THE TANK

"I have fond memories of a (Public Domain) Amiga game called Tank Attack," says Kirk as we chat about his Dreams project. "It was four-player and it was one of a few games that my

THERE ARE SO MANY CHOICES WITH DREAMS, AND THE SKY'S THE LIMIT.

older brothers and I could play together. It was great fun and brought us all closer. As soon as I learned about Dreams I wanted to recreate the game, and those classic times I had as a kid."

There's a lot happening in Tank Attack to love, including rebounding shots – the



Kirk was inspired by an Amiga game from his childhood.

screen fills with them – but in Dreams it's the simple things that can take creative thinking: "Deciding how best to move from one arena to another," says Kirk as we ask what element was most challenging. "There are so many choices with Dreams, and the sky's the limit, but the beauty is in experimenting."

Kirk has found using PS Move controllers for creating in Dreams has been key, but admits, "it took a bit of practice". Using the in-game tutorials made all the difference. "There's handy tool tips to tell you what the modes do and

sculpting with the moves feels nice and intuitive."

Coupled with the inclusivity of the Dreams community, Kirk felt well-armed to succeed. "I reached out to the community with a logic issue and another creator actually built me the logic and shared it with me," he says. "The community is great and people are always ready to help you."

Has Dreams impressed? "Yes, there's no way I could've ever imagined that I would be able to create a game, especially one that others can play too. It's amazing," he says.

#MADEINDREAMS

Do you have a fantastic project or game that you'd love to share? If so, email us at opm@futurenet.com or tweet us @OPM_UK.



DREAMS TUTORIAL #5

No frontier is final when you're creating in Dreams.



Start creating by turning the page



How to... Build a spaceship in Dreams

Complex models are easier to create in stages. Here's how...



ABOUT THE ARTIST

Martin Nebelong is a Danish artist. Among his many clients you'll find Media Molecule, the dev behind Dreams, which he sculpts for now and then.

For this tutorial we're taking a trip to outer space, and for that we need a spaceship. So that is what we'll be sculpting.

Complex models like this are best created in stages. We'll go through a design phase, a refinement phase, and finally a

finish phase where we'll apply materials and paint the model.

I personally find that this type of sculpt is more difficult to do than organic scenery, as designing man-made objects requires more thought about the object's form and function. It's not enough for something to look

good, it also needs to convince the viewer that it could do the things you're claiming it can.

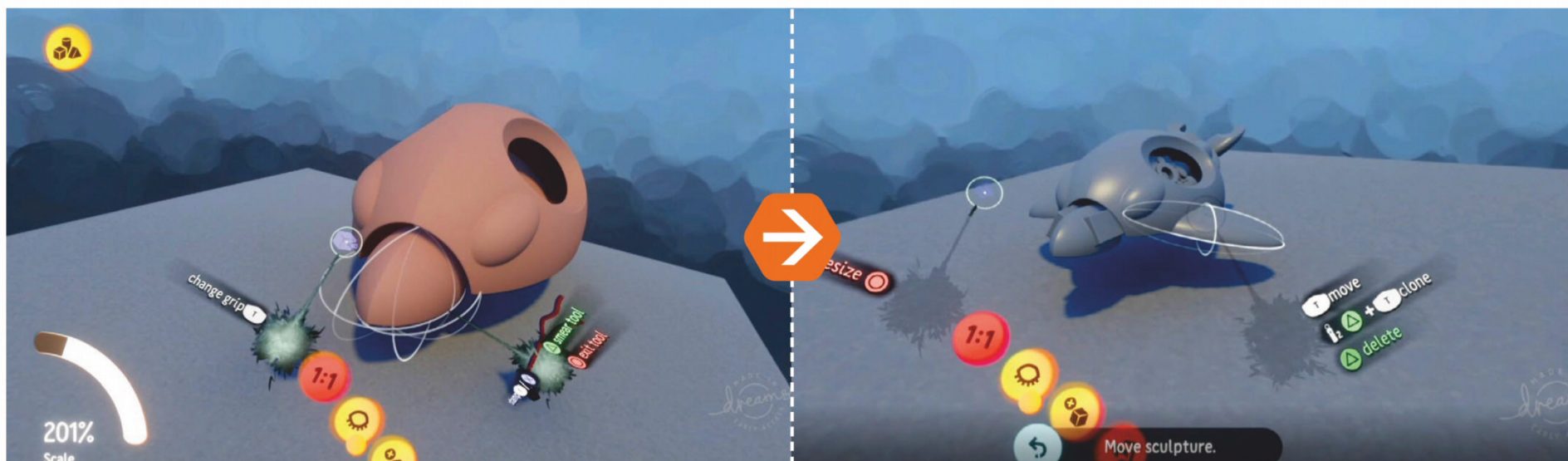
As with any sculpt, your final scene is only as good as the elements within it, and generally in Dreams it pays off big time if you spend a little extra time and energy to make really convincing assets.

I use PlayStation Move controllers for all my Dreams scenes, and I recommend them for creating in Dreams.

**DESIGNING MAN-MADE OBJECTS
REQUIRES THOUGHT ABOUT THE
OBJECT'S FORM AND FUNCTION.**

To infinity and beyond!

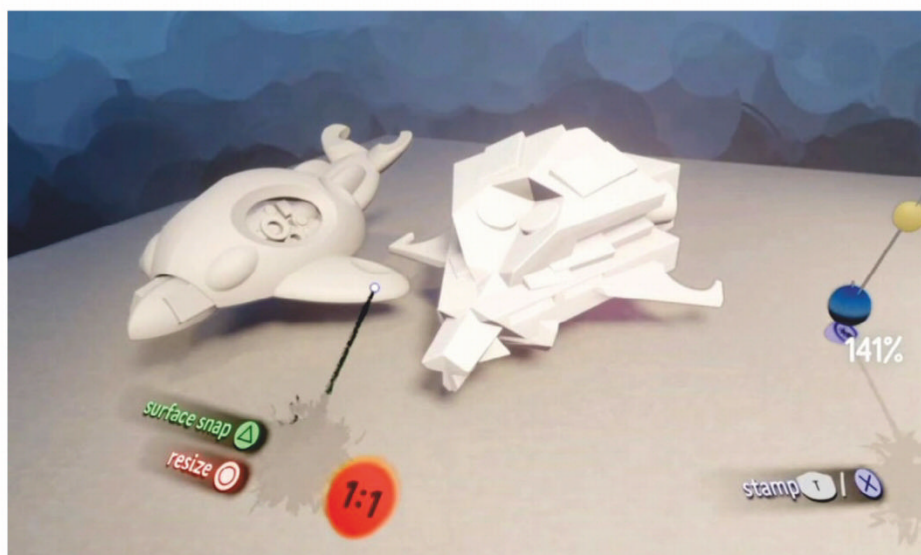
Create a spaceship that'll take you to the stars



01 START WITH BASIC SHAPES

The first step of the process is to build out a few rough concepts to find one what you like and want to keep working on. For this we'll use the Sculpt mode tools, like the cube and sphere Clay tools. Enable guides: Mirror and

Clipped Mirror. Start sculpting using the sphere Clay tool. Enter Edit Shape, then stretch the shape a little and enable Section. Switch the Sculpt mode to Stamp since Smear isn't ideal for this type of work – you want clean, precise edges.



02 BUILD MORE SHIPS

Scope out of the model once you're happy with it. Change the material if you like and add a spotlight to throw some shadows and show the form better. Start building a few more models so you'll have a selection to choose from.

I sculpted ship number 2 in the example above almost exclusively with a cube Clay tool to get a different, much more angular look. You can change the tool shape as needed via the Edit Shape menu.

03 ENOUGH IS ENOUGH

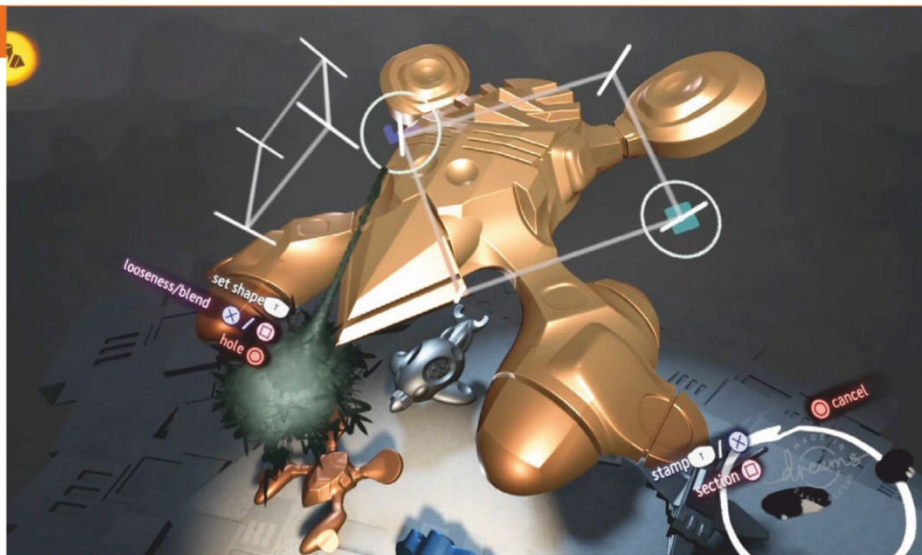
Using the same technique of laying down basic shapes in Add or Subtract mode, build a few more quick concepts for your spaceship to see what works for you. Here I also spiced up the environment a bit with some 'greebling', (repeating shapes to add interest and imply a lot of design and detail). You can add a more moody light setup to get an idea of how the ships would look in a light scenario closer to what you want your finished scene to look like.



04 REBUILDING THE CHOSEN DESIGN

Once you find a design that pleases you, it's time to take it to a more finished state. Isolate the design from the other prototypes either by moving it away from the others, or by saving it out as a new sculpt. You might be able to

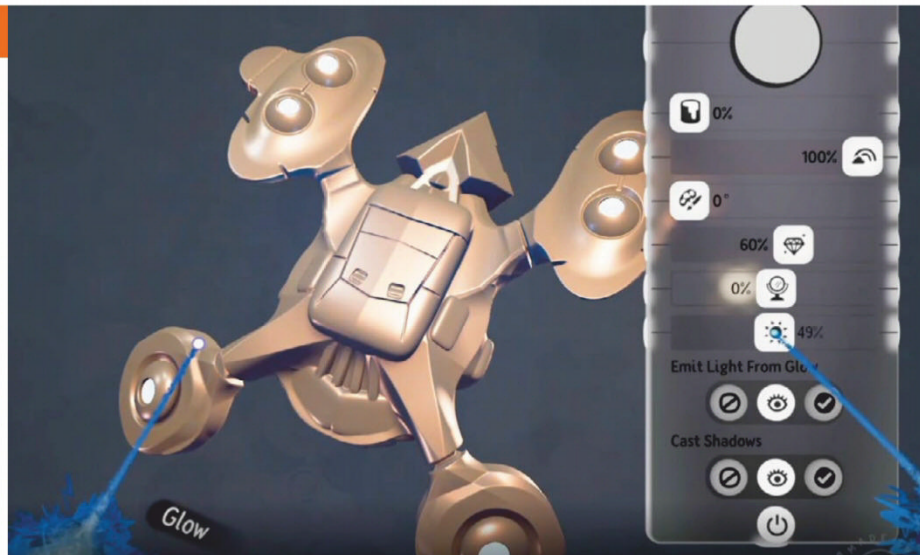
reuse your design 'sketch' for the next part of the process, but in my case I decided to start over and replicate the design to optimise the number of shapes I used. This decreases the overall performance cost of the ship.



05 ADD PANEL CUTS

Your ship has a fairly smooth surface, so let's break up its surface a bit by cutting thin panel-lines through the model.

Select the cube Clay tool, set it to subtract and open the shape. Flatten the shape all the way down until it looks like the outline in the screenshot. This is the Extrude mode which will allow you to manually choose the depth of each cut. After cutting through the shape, fill the gaps between the elements.



06 ENGINE GLOW

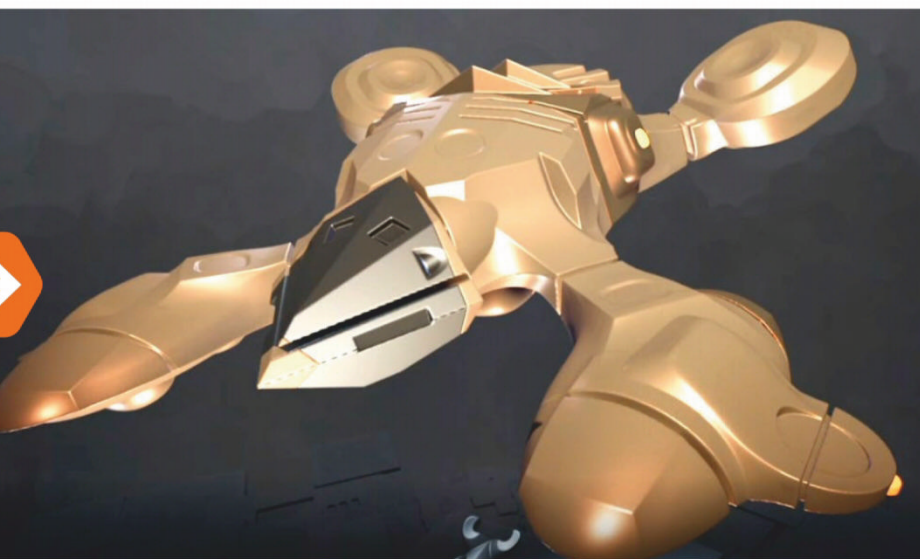
Any proper spaceship needs an engine. For my design, I make a new sculpt and place cones in inserts I made below the spaceship wings. I then open Sculpture>Outer properties and turn up the Glow property until I get something that I'm satisfied with.

This glow is very closely related to the Bloom effect, which you'll find under the Cameras And Lighting gadgets>Grade And Effects>Screen Effects tab.



07 CUT UP THE MODEL

Up until now, the ship has been one single model. This means that everything has the same material properties. But what if you want part of the model to look like plastic, and another part to look like shiny metal? Luckily Dreams makes that quite easy! Scope into the model, select Tools>Cutout tool



and turn on the Upright guide. You can't use Mirror with the cutting tools so sometimes you'll have to eyeball things and do your best to keep your spaceship symmetrical (if that's the look you're after). After cutting the model in a few pieces, you can go in and change the individual material settings.

08 PAINTING EXPLAINED

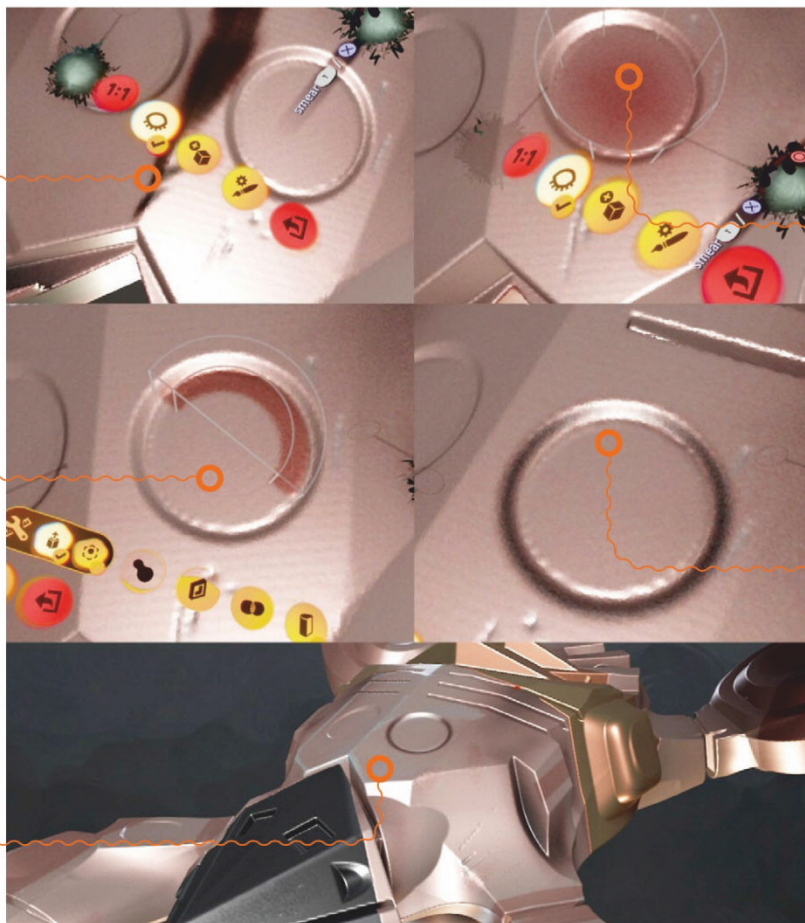
Painting is a big part of making your models look believable. No real

surface is as even as the default surfaces in Dreams, so you want to detail them a bit. Scope into the part you want to paint, then switch to Tools>Spraypaint tool.

Opacity allows you to lay down colour quickly or more slowly. You can scale this up and down while painting.

Just like when you're sculpting, you can use different tool shapes to help you get the design you want for your paintwork.

Apply wear and scratches to parts of your model that are exposed to the elements and areas that would naturally get worn down.



Soft blend is a must when you want your paint to be applied with a soft falloff. I usually apply at least a little bit of soft blend when I'm painting. This can also be tweaked while you're painting.

Use real-world references when you're painting. Notice how dirt and grime will in collect in crevices and apply the same type of dirt to your model.

on the store

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EXPANSION

£19.99

Street Fighter V: Champion Edition

Upgrade to become a real contender

Never jumped into the ring? When 14 February rolls round, you'll be able to buy Street Fighter V: Champion Edition, which includes everything from the base game plus almost every scrap of DLC that's been released since.

However, if you've been throwing down with Ken, Cammy, and the rest since 2016, you won't be left with a mouthful of dust. The Upgrade Kit essentially turns whichever edition of Street Fighter V you started out with into the full Champion Edition. How's that for a montage moment? The Upgrade Kit will first fill in any gaps in your costume or fighter library (excluding Fighting Chance costumes, which you'll still need to buy with Fight Money

through Menat's Fantasy Fortune Readings, brand collaboration costumes, and the Capcom Pro Tour DLC).

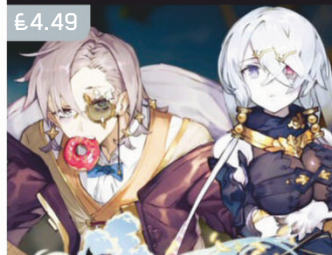
In the run-up to the release of the Champion Edition existing players have already received a heap of new content. You and your rival can duke it out with two new characters, angelic

magic-master Gill and move-mimicker Seth, right now. Besides these returning fighters, all existing characters were given brand-new V-Skills last December, opening up even more strategies for you and your player two to pick apart. Looks like 14 February is shaping up to be a very special date indeed.

YOU AND YOUR RIVAL CAN DUKE IT OUT WITH TWO NEW CHARACTERS, GILL AND SETH, RIGHT NOW.

DLC

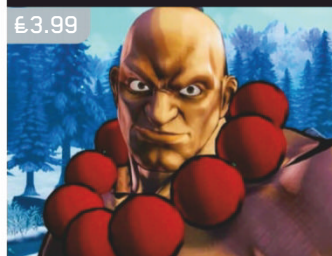
£4.49



ATELIER RYZA - THE END OF AN ADVENTURE AND BEYOND

This is a side-story starring creepy clawed cutie Lila and her companion Empel. The pair could fight beside you in the game but this is the first time they've both been controllable outside battle.

£3.99



SAMURAI SHODOWN - WAN-FU

The fighter with the never-ending story returns, along with his flaming stone pillar last seen in Samurai Shodown II. He can hurl this obelisk, ripped fresh from the temple, at foes at the risk of opening up a small window of vulnerability.

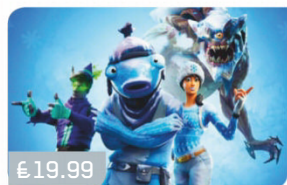
£24.99



DEEMO REBORN - CLASSIC SONG PACKS SEASON PASS

For the first quarter of 2020, this reimagining of rhythm game royalty is going to be getting three song packs every month, each containing five songs, and this pass will collect all of those plus all of the already-released classic songs. Get a groove on!

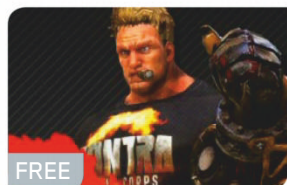
ALSO ON PSN



£19.99

FORTNITE - POLAR LEGENDS PACK

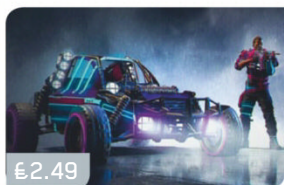
Here's hoping this super-cool cosmetic pack doesn't all melt by Spring - or turn to slush if climate change gives us another 20°C February.



FREE

CONTRA: ROGUE CORPS - ASSASSIN PACK

A bunch of in-game items, plus a butterfly-inspired Sister .H skin for Ms Harakiri and new T-shirt for muscle man Kaiser.



£2.49

DYING LIGHT - RETROWAVE BUNDLE

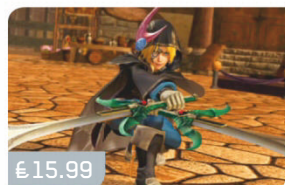
Like this game's decaying infected, '80s nostalgia just won't die. This pack splatters neon all over you and your guns for a snazzy matching set.



£7.99

ONE PIECE WORLD SEEKER - EXTRA EPISODE 3: THE UNFINISHED MAP

Straw Hat ally Law does his part to uncover the treasure of Prison Island in this bonus story.



£15.99

DISSIDIA FINAL FANTASY NT - 3RD APPEARANCE SPECIAL SET

Sephiroth and Rinoa Heartilly are an odd pairing. They both get three more looks here.

JUST ANOTHER STATISTIC

Ubisoft revealed that since Hardcore mode's debut, 17.7% of top-tier agents have met their demise, and only 1.2% of players reached World Tier 5 during this game mode's first week.



LIVE GAMES

NEW

Ringing in 2020 with a bang!

The Division 2 gears up for a tough act to follow

Year One in DC began by asking you to rescue the President. Episode Two saw the Strategic Homeland Division making off with an impressive bit of kit and one step closer to ending the epidemic. Now, the final Year One episode takes you back to the beginning.

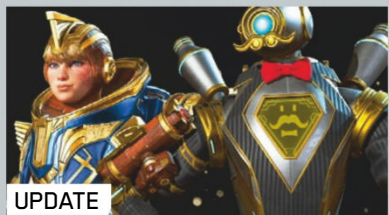
Set in New York (the first game's location), you hunt a fellow agent who betrayed you. We'll give you three

guesses who you'll have in your sights...

Dropping in February, a large portion of Episode Three's content will be free for all existing players, including two story missions and a specialisation. In addition, Year One pass holders will enjoy two more classified assignments.

The developer has also announced that the Foundry raid will drop mid-2020. The game's first raid, Operation Dark Hours, got a new lease of life thanks to Hardcore mode and has now seen its first squad all make it out alive. You know what they say about biting the bullet: don't, you'll crack your teeth.

WE'LL GIVE YOU THREE GUESSES WHO YOU'LL HAVE IN YOUR SIGHTS IN NEW YORK.



UPDATE

APEX LEGENDS – GRAND SOIREE

Dubbed an 'arcade event', mid-January saw a rapid roulette of game modes arriving for the shooter. A switch up every two days saw the return of Armed & Dangerous and the King's Canyon map in addition to a slew of never-before-played modes. Alongside an event-specific battle pass of sorts, there was an event shop offering shiny art-deco-inspired skins.



UPDATE

DARWIN PROJECT

This brand-new micro battle royale pits ten inmates against one another in the post-apocalyptic Canadian Rockies. You begin matches already armed to the teeth (axes, bows and, er snowballs have been revealed so far), ready for whatever the 11th player – the mercurial Show Director – might throw at you, up to and including a nuke or additional health for your adversaries.



CHARACTER

WARFRAME – EMPYREAN

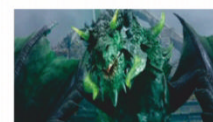
All aboard the Railjack, Tenno. This space combat update will require all hands on deck as someone will be needed to pilot the eponymous ship, another to man the guns, and a third person will be required to put out the inevitable, resulting fires. Solo play isn't impossible – it's just very unlikely to succeed. Set a course and strike back against the Grineer.

THE MONTH IN... FAMILIAR BEGINNINGS



@MrOscarTK

New year, new-old adventures! Many live games used January as another opportunity to entice old players back, but The Elder Scrolls Online's Skyrim-based Greymoor expansion announcement is bringing the real heat.



Even though it's offline and single-

player, gamers won't stop playing **Skyrim**. So what if that dedication could be harnessed for online? While Fallout 76 went the wrong way about things (it was intriguing, but lacked many of the things we loved about Fallout), The Elder Scrolls Online seems to have been building towards this moment for nearly five years.

Set centuries before the main Elder Scrolls games, TESO has given us prequel takes on classic areas for a while now (Morrowind, Summerset, Elsweyr). And as last year's Season Of The Dragon marched on we knew Zenimax was going to bring Skyrim back. In my opinion, it's waited just the right amount of time. Years of care and updates have earned our trust and established TESO as a great Elder Scrolls in its own right. Unlike Fallout 76, Greymoor doesn't feel like it'll be a quick cash-in, but a new adventure playing with the familiar. Turn to p16 for the full lowdown on what TESO's Skyrim update will offer.

BLU-RAYS



Joker

Origin story is no laughing matter



Phoenix almost played Batman in Darren Aronofsky's cancelled Year One movie.

Racking up 11 Oscar nominations, and banking a billion at the box office – the first R-rated movie in history to do so – Todd Phillips' standalone Joker origin story is the most talked-about movie of the past 12 months. It's also one of the best; a stark character study masquerading as a comic-book movie.

Don't overlook that last point: Joker is fundamentally different from anything Marvel, or indeed DC, has pumped out over the last decade. Deep, dark, and disturbing, it has more in common with Martin Scorsese classic Taxi Driver than it does with The Dark Knight.

Joaquin Phoenix is astonishing as Arthur Fleck, a clown-for-hire having a pretty terrible time of it. One of Gotham's downtrodden, and profoundly failed by America's mental health care services, Arthur is pushed to the brink after a violent encounter on a train starts a tragic transformation. As Arthur spirals, so does Gotham itself,

the city a powder keg waiting to explode from the moment billionaire Bat-dad Thomas Wayne unashamedly declares the citizens "clowns" on live TV. Though set in the '80s (a stylistic homage to the films that inspired Philips), Joker has its finger on the political pulse in unexpected and daring ways.

Exquisitely shot, scored, and directed it may be, but Joker's true triumph is its towering central performance. Engendering powerful empathy for Fleck, Joaquin Phoenix will make you care for Gotham's Clown Prince Of Crime, until the point when you no longer can. **Jordan Farley**

COMING SOON



GEMINI MAN

17 FEB

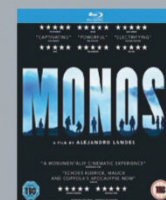
It's Will Smith vs (a younger) Will Smith in Ang Lee's technically impressive, but otherwise dated, science-fiction action-fest.



MALEFICENT: MISTRESS OF EVIL

17 FEB

Angelina Jolie returns as Sleeping Beauty's nemesis in a sequel more forgettable than its predecessor.



MONOS

17 FEB

Child soldiers keep a hostage captive in this extraordinary Colombian debut that's best summed up as 'Lord Of The Flies meets Apocalypse Now'.



ROMA - THE CRITERION COLLECTION

24 FEB

Alfonso Cuarón won Best Director at last year's Oscars for his black-and-white stunner.



ZOMBIELAND: DOUBLE TAP

24 FEB

Reaching screens a full decade after the original rule-breaking zom-com, this belated sequel is fun, if hardly essential.



COME TO DADDY

2 MAR

Elijah Wood has the reunion from hell with his estranged father Stephen McHattie in this twisty, and outrageously gory, horror.



TERMINATOR: DARK FATE

2 MAR

Linda Hamilton makes her long-anticipated return as Sarah Connor in the best Terminator sequel since T2 (which isn't saying much).



FIRST LOVE

2 MAR

Prolific Japanese master Takashi Miike directs this typically ultraviolent crime comedy about a boxer and an escort who get caught up in a drug ring.



THE PEANUT BUTTER FALCON

2 MAR

Shia LaBeouf is superb in this road movie about a man who breaks out of his care home to train as a wrestler.



MIDWAY

9 MAR

Roland 'Independence Day' Emmerich directs this bombastic, jingoistic recreation of the 1942 naval Battle Of Midway. Explosively boring.

Streaming **now**



A second season of Star Trek: Picard has already been confirmed.

FORMAT AMAZON PRIME VIDEO **PRICE** £7.99 A MONTH

Star Trek: Picard

Jean-Luc returns for an engaging series

The last time the world saw Patrick Stewart's legendary Starfleet Captain Jean-Luc Picard on screens was almost 20 years ago in dismal Next Gen movie Nemesis. Now, hot on the heels of resurgent series Star Trek: Discovery, Picard has been given a shot at redemption, and the results are a stratospheric success.

Set in real-time some two decades after we last saw Picard, the years have not been kind to Jean-Luc. He may be living an idyllic life at Château Picard winery in France with his adorable pup (who he calls 'Number One'), but his sleep is haunted by the event that drove him out of Starfleet – the destruction of Romulus and the botched rescue of its 900 million inhabitants. Then he finds a new purpose when a mysterious young woman named Dahj enters his life.

Dahj's identity is key to the story, and best discovered for yourself. But it's

also a story of legacy, family, and making amends for one's past featuring, as it does, a main character who's almost 100 years old. Not to say that the show is short on action. There are pulse-quickening set-pieces to rival JJ Abrams' Trek movies, and the team haven't skimped on the VFX budget.

Long-serving Trek fans will undoubtedly get the most out of it, but early episodes do an admirable job of giving newcomers everything they need to keep up. In other words, if you're tempted to watch, there's no reason not to make it so. **Jordan Farley**



NOW AND INCOMING



TITANS SEASON 2

FORMAT NETFLIX **PRICE** £8.99 A MONTH

DC's series starring comic book sidekicks (including Robin and Superboy) returns for a second season of super-moody super-heroics. Masked mercenary Deathstroke causes trouble for the Titans, while there's an expanded role for Iain Glen's Bruce Wayne.

LOCKE & KEY

FORMAT NETFLIX **PRICE** £8.99 A MONTH

Based on the acclaimed comics by Joe Hill (the son of Stephen King), this ten-episode supernatural horror series centres on three siblings who move to their creepy ancestral home and find keys that bestow magical abilities. Powers a demon will do anything to attain.



TREADSTONE

FORMAT AMAZON PRIME VIDEO **PRICE** £7.99 A MONTH

Set in the same universe as the Jason Bourne films, Treadstone explores the origins of the CIA black-ops program that turned Matt Damon into a superhuman assassin with the skills to kill with a piece of toast (probably). Diverting, but it's no Bourne Ultimatum.



NI NO KUNI

FORMAT NETFLIX **PRICE** £8.99 A MONTH

Making its way to UK shores after releasing in Japan last year, this animated Ni No Kuni movie tells a new story set in the same magical world as Level-5's games. The film's director, Yoshiyuki Momose, previously worked on both Ni No Kunis, and the Studio Ghibli movies Spirited Away and Porco Rosso. Joe Hisaishi, who composed for the games, provides the score.



INFO

PUB WARNER BROS INTERACTIVE ENTERTAINMENT
DEV ROCKSTEADY STUDIOS

RELEASED 2011, PS3

GET IT NOW £12.99, PS STORE, PS NOW

NEED TO KNOW

- 1 Two million copies sold in the first week of release.
- 2 The game has an official graphic novel... and album.
- 3 Troy Baker plays Two-Face and, ironically, Robin.

Joker has a huge part to play, but there's no shortage of other fan favourites determined to ruin your day.

Holy cowl!

Every month we celebrate the most important, innovative, or just plain great games from PlayStation's past. This month, we adopt our best heavy smoker voices and forget how to smile as we revisit a Caped Crusader classic



Batman: Arkham City

Arkham Asylum was the first great Batman game, but *City* was arguably the first true Batman *simulator*. When it hit shelves in October 2011, we had, for the very first time, something that allowed us to explore a fully realised 3D city as the dark knight. Throw in a load of classic villains, and it was a costumed dream come true.

Okay, so it isn't Gotham City *exactly*. Arkham City is essentially an immense open prison, handily explaining away the lack of civilians – but it's a city nonetheless. There's a very strong story, and even some intriguing side-quests that bring in villains lesser-known outside of hardcore Batfandom, such as bandage-bonced Hush and the mysterious Azrael. However, you're free to wander off and do your own thing simply because you're in the mood to mete out some extremely violent justice to a bunch of strangers.

Insomniac's Spider-Man may win the joy of movement competition when it comes to superhero games, but

Arkham City comes swooping in very close behind. Each and every time you leap from a tall building, Batman fully unfurls his cape, and you can glide for distances that are as satisfying as they are hilariously unrealistic. Diving serves as both a way to quickly reach the ground to kick baddie backside and a carefully manipulated mechanic to extend and speed up your flight. The grapnel gun is more at home in a city environment, too, ensuring you're never far from an opportunity to soar over the rooftops.

City sits between Asylum and *Knight* not only chronologically, but also in terms of content. Combat remains the same entrancing ballet of brutality people loved in Asylum, and that game's carefully curated claustrophobia is also retained for the indoor sections. This is

THE SAME ENTRANCING BALLET OF BRUTALITY THAT PEOPLE LOVED IN ASYLUM.

married to the wondrous freedom of an open world that carried over to *Knight*, without that sequel's controversial Bat-tank shenanigans. At one point, Rocksteady toyed with the idea of a multiplayer mode for *City*, but decided to dedicate all its energies to a single-player experience instead. It paid off.

WAYNE'S WORLD

As enjoyable as the freeform element is, there's a brilliant Batman story to take part in, supported by stellar acting. Kevin Conroy once again proves that he *is* The Batman, Mark Hamill returns to provide a sensational Joker, Grey DeLisle is a purrfect Catwoman, and we have *City* to thank for the introduction of Nolan North's preposterous Mockney Penguin. As you'd hope, an assortment of villains means an equally varied number of environments and setups. Who can forget the courtroom brawl against an army of Two-Face's thugs, or the Mr Freeze boss fight that demands you use a selection of surprise attacks in true Batman style?

Another great thing about this game is that, while it can be enjoyed in isolation, knowledge of the prequel adds an extra layer to the experience in a way that few games before or since have managed. Sure, it means being familiar with the unique combat and how the detective mode and gadgets work, but a continuous story thrums in the background throughout. If you've played *Arkham Asylum*, the Bane subplot immediately makes sense. A few friendly faces return. And *that* ending that nobody saw coming... wow! A Bat-classic through and through.



■ It's a dark and dirty city, but beautiful nonetheless. ■ You *are* Batman. Unfortunately for everybody else. ■ It would be nice to run into a simple shoplifter.

Name that game

Guess the four games, and their scores, from these review quotes

1 **DESPITE ITS OVERTLY POLITICAL SETTING AND THE CURRENT CLIMATE THIS IS A GAME WITH NOTHING TO SAY.**

2 **HANDLES AS SMOOTHLY AS A BUTTERED DREAM, AND LETS YOU TURN GIANT FLYING BRAIN-SQUIDS INTO 8-BIT SPRITES AND/OR SHEEP AND/OR DISCO DIVAS.**

3 **WITH A DEARTH OF PROPER MISSIONS TO TACKLE, YOU'RE OFTEN FORCED TO FLY HAPHAZARDLY AROUND, HOPING AN OUTPOST COMES INTO VIEW OR A HOSTAGE EVENT POPS UP.**

4 **DEFINITELY A GREAT GAME FOR FRIENDS AND FAMILY... THOUGH DON'T PLAY IT WITH YOUR NEW FLAM-BAE.**

ANSWERS

1. The Division 2, issue #161, 7/10.
2. Ratchet & Clank, issue #123, 8/10.
3. Far Cry V, issue #149, 8/10.
4. Overcooked 2, issue #153, 8/10.



OPM TIME MACHINE 5 YEARS AGO

Were you tough enough to take on our hardcore issue, **OPM #107**? Challenges awaited – along with rewards aplenty



Above We went hands-on with Battlefield Hardline and discovered what Battlefield can be when you transfer it from the war zone to an urban setting. Not unlike a night out with Team OPM, it turns out – full of team-wrangling and fighting, and never to be repeated.

Below left Memory cards, sexy stars, niche sports – we paid tribute to PlayStation's long-gone trends.

Below right Devs revealed which bits of games they found toughest. A Platinum on MGS4? Nails-hard.



Far left So much darkness. So much pain. Masochists that we are, when it released a couple of issues later we gave it 9/10.

Left We went hands-on with The Witcher 3. Who'd have thought Geralt could get so big? [Mim, that's enough – ed]

DON'T MAKE ME PLAY! FIFA 17: THE JOURNEY

Don't like it. Never tried it. Every month we force one of our team to play their most feared game



INFO

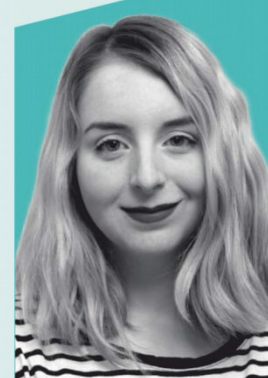
PUB EA SPORTS
DEV EA VANCOUVER
RELEASED 2016, PS4
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WHAT?

FIFA 17 introduced a single-player story mode, The Journey. Follow Alex Hunter as he goes from wee bairn to pro player, amassing skill points and spicy dialogue options along the way.

WHO?



Jess Kinghorn loves running and shooting in Apex Legends – so surely FIFA would be right up her alley. Unfortunately, she'd sooner punt the game box than do anything sport-adjacent.

What can I say? I'm more into PES myself... okay, that's a lie but perhaps I had you going for a trillionth of a second.

Wouldn't you know, somewhere between all the jokes about women not understanding the offside rule, an interest in football just never quite manifested. But then once upon a time I wasn't one for shooters and now look at the Apex Legend I've become.

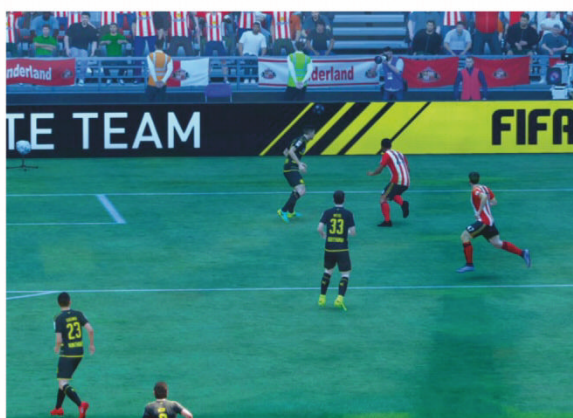
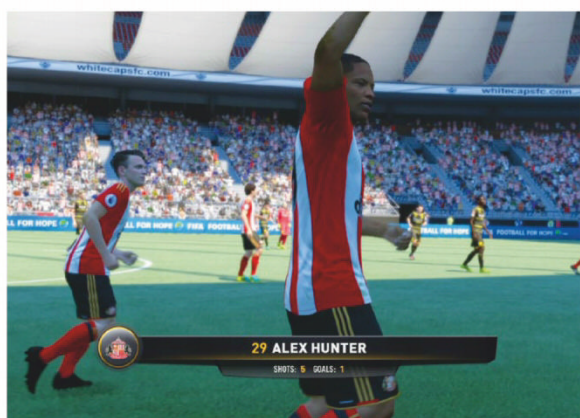
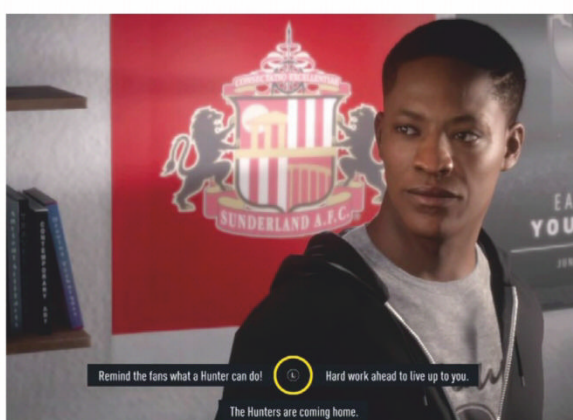
My point is, stranger things have happened – apparently, that would include EA putting an RPG inside a yearly sport title. Wee Alex Hunter probably showed a lot of promise before I entered the scene. But even as I fumble my way through this early match, dear old Dad's reaction is disproportionate. As he storms off, I realise it's all too late – this light dusting

**IT'S ALL TOO LATE
THIS LIGHT DUSTING
OF HUMAN DRAMA HAS
REELED ME IN.**

of human drama has reeled me in, hook, line, and sinker. On penalties, I give the ball such a soft touch that little Alex looks as though he's about to pitch over. My tiny teammates insist that I "smashed it in" even though that's definitely not what happened.

Seven years later, Alex and his bestie are staring down Exit Trials and a shot at a pro contract. After failing spectacularly and seeing the disappointment in the dead-eyed gaze of onlookers whose character models have aged worse than you'd think for a four-year-old game, I'm determined to make this plucky young Clapham teen's dreams come true. An early, supremely lucky goal lets me scrape into the top ten when all is said and done. Mum's elated. Get in!

Unfortunately, invested as I am in Alex's success and choosing all of the fiery dialogue options, this is still a football game – and boy do things drag when the story leaves for minutes at a time. It's an early bath for me.



In the grand scheme of game narrative, it's a light touch. But performances from the likes of Adetomiwa Edun and a score by Atticus Ross sell the cinematic fantasy.

THE DEFINITIVE GUIDE TO CURRENT-GEN'S GREATEST GAMES

PS4 HALL OF FAME

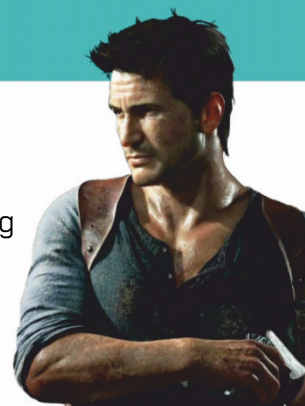


1



UNCHARTED 4: A THIEF'S END

Nathan Drake's swan song is a daring evolution. It combines series-defining set-pieces, quietly devastating storytelling beats, and sprawling levels that make you feel like a real-life explorer. This franchise finale retains its signature charm, with the wisecracks flowing as fast as the bullets, while the new characters each justify their inclusion. With an astonishing attention to detail, it's Naughty Dog's best yet.



2



RED DEAD REDEMPTION 2

There are a lot of open world games, but none that make you feel like you're a part of a world in quite the same way as Arthur Morgan's wild west adventure. Tremendously physical, an epic story, and some of the most satisfying headshots you'll ever find.

3



GOD OF WAR

A departure in some ways but a resounding return in others, Kratos is back with a son *and* a ruddy big axe. Taking the legend from Greek to Norse mythology, this entry brings a lot to the table while improving on what was core to the earlier series' identity.

4



DREAMS

Though it's still in early access and lacks PS VR support, this is still a feature-laden platform of artistic tools that enables you to create games, and resets what a console 'game' should be and do. Dreams should be installed on every PS4.

5



THE WITCHER 3: WILD HUNT GAME OF THE YEAR EDITION

The White Wolf's epic journey is an RPG experience like no other on PS4. It's been made even more spectacular with this gigantic pack stuffed with DLC, making it a must-have part of any gaming library.

6



ASSASSIN'S CREED ODYSSEY

A beautiful open world where every Greek island tells a unique story. AC Odyssey is an epic in the truest sense, with lively writing, mythical beasts to battle, and a poignant Assassin's Creed story that lays the bed for all the lore to come. A brilliant spectacle.

7



HORIZON ZERO DAWN

A staggeringly large world that condenses cracking combat, accessible systems, and uncut eye-candy into an action RPG that will please anyone. In Aloy, PlayStation might just have a new icon. Come for the robo-fights, stay for the exquisitely dense mythology.

8



MARVEL'S SPIDER-MAN

Borrowing heavily from Rocksteady's Batman series, this delivers the heart and soul of Marvel's superhero. It ticks every box you could ask for: perfect web-swinging, a powerful story, a roster of classic villains, and all of New York to defend.

9



GRAND THEFT AUTO V

Laughing in the face of other cross-gen ports, GTA V on PS4 is more than a mere HD remaster. Upped to a glorious 1080p, it weaves everything that made the PS3 original great, with new music, more dynamic weather, and a game-changing FPS mode.

10



SEKIRO: SHADOWS DIE TWICE

FromSoftware's latest adventure repackages its unflinchingly difficult combat into a fantastical take on feudal Japan. More accessible than Bloodborne but layered with equally clever and subtle ideas, this is director Hidetaka Miyazaki's best yet.

11



BLOODBORNE

With the finest third-person melee combat in gaming, drool-worthy art design and the most twisted monsters imaginable, this is a gorgeously gothic must-have. The Old Hunters expansion adds enough nightmare fuel to make a return to Yharnam essential.

12



MONSTER HUNTER: WORLD

Presenting a vibrant open world, light on story but heavy on action, this is the most accessible entry in the series yet. Perfecting the feel-good grind through its complex systems and pitch-perfect multiplayer, it's a PS4 must-play.

13



RESIDENT EVIL 2

Powered by the RE Engine, this remake is more than a classic game with a facelift. New Tyrant and zombie AI adds tension, and fresh areas not seen in the original PS1 classic update the core gameplay making this Resi 2 is a celebration of PS1 *and* PS4.

14



HITMAN 2

Agent 47 sneaks his way into the ultimate PS4 stealth-'em-up. With a fantastic set of new maps, it also plays host to legacy content for all the missions in the first game, making it the new de facto Hitman hub. No stealth game is more satisfying.

15



CONTROL

Running, gunning, flying, flinging – this one has it all. Satisfying gunplay plus a slew of telekinetic powers make a winning combination as you explore one of the most compelling settings on PS4 to date, the Oldest House. (New) weird and absolutely wonderful.

16

**DEVIL MAY CRY 5**

Another classic PlayStation series returns to form on PS4. Slicing up demons and doing so stylishly has never felt better, especially when each of the three characters (Nero, Dante, and V) plays so uniquely. It looks stunning, and plays even better.

17

**RESIDENT EVIL VII: BIOHAZARD**

Capcom's greatest series returns to terrifying form thanks to a trip to Louisiana to meet the Baker family, who stalk you around their mansion. While the second half of the game doesn't match the intensity of the first, this is still essential for any horror fan.

18

**TOWERFALL ASCENSION**

You haven't lived until you've enjoyed a four-player free-for-all in this instant couchplay classic. The solo campaign is fine by itself, but almost nothing beats the arrow-grabbing, death-defying last-second kills of local multiplayer's mayhem.

19

**DISHONORED 2**

The follow-up to a PS3 great, mixing a creative skillset with impressive level design to create a Kaldwin-winning immersive sim. From the shifting rooms of The Clockwork Mansion to learning to link your powers, there's so much scope for experimenting.

20

**THE LAST OF US REMASTERED**

This modern masterpiece just gets stronger with age, like a full-bodied stilton. A brutal, emotionally honest take on the end of the world, Naughty Dog's stealth shooter is simply one of the best games ever, even if this PS4 port doesn't add much to it.

21

**PERSONA 5**

Atlus' anime wonder dazzles thanks to its mix of friendship building, stylish dungeons, and speedy turn-based combat. Add a story oozing with darkness and taboo-busting confidence and you have the gold standard for JRPGs on PS4.

22

**METRO EXODUS**

Larger but maintaining an emphasis on storytelling and experimentation, this sequel to Last Light pulls no punches. If you're looking for one of the best narrative-led shooters on PS4 this mix of FPS, horror, stealth, and survival shouldn't be ignored.

23

**DAYS GONE**

A beautiful, epic story told at its own pace, Days Gone is a modern western played out across a society that's just crumbled. The challenge of the hordes and the emotional clout of the narrative manage to push above the cookie-cutter ideas.

24

**SHADOW OF THE COLOSSUS**

Bluepoint completely overhauls the visuals of Team Ico's masterpiece but still manages to match the original step-for-step in its remake. New controls and a beautiful photo mode add to the package. Wander's tragic quest has never looked or played better.

25

**BATMAN: ARKHAM KNIGHT**

Rocksteady sends the Bat out with a bang. A compelling, cathartic story adds new layers to the Dark Knight, while PS4 allows Gotham to blossom with a truly amazing engine. The stealth still sings, the fisticuffs are fab, and the Batmobile is brilliant.

BUBBLING UNDER

Alternative picks

We mine the library for gold. This month: hard-hitting fighting games

PICK #1**SKULLGIRLS 2ND ENCORE**

Jess Kinghorn's Hell of a bad hair day

Despite looking like the love child of a 1930s Fleischer Studios short and one of Sunrise's 1980s mecha animes, this is more than a roster of pretty faces. Besides the lavish character design, a standout for us is the set of in-depth tutorials that tell you what to do *and why* you might want to do it. Too many fighters' tutorials assume a high level of mechanical literacy but this one definitely filled in a lot of gaps for me.

PICK #2**TEKKEN 7**

Oscar Taylor-Kent polishes his iron fist

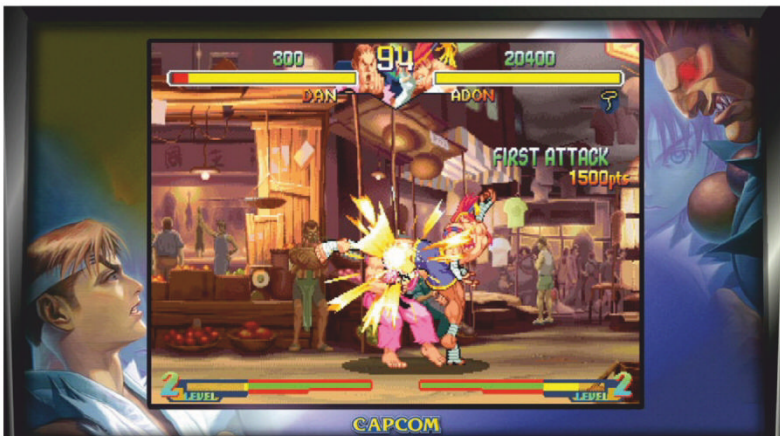
This excellent fighter has been around for a few years, and it's only getting better. Having had all that time to strap updates to its title belt, Tekken 7 is one of the greatest fighting games ever, true to a legacy that stretches back to PS1. With a hugely varied roster (including some great crossovers), there's a wealth of combos to learn, and it's all at a pace that's easy to follow and learn – which no fighter should overlook.

THIS FIGHTER HAS BEEN AROUND FOR A FEW YEARS AND IT'S ONLY GETTING BETTER.

PICK #3**STREET FIGHTER 30TH ANNIVERSARY COLLECTION**

Ian Dean goes the distance

What's better than one Street Fighter? Thirteen slight variations on Street Fighter. This collection is essential for retro-heads because of the inclusion of 1987's Street Fighter and a library of art and insights on the series. But for fight-fans it's Street Fighter III: 3rd Strike – Fight For The Future that remains a joy to play both off- and online. Everyone should own this collection.



The Street Fighter Alpha series joins the roster, alongside SFII and SFIII variants. All represent some of the best the genre offers.

THE VIRTUAL REALITY HITS YOU HAVE TO PLAY

PS VR HALL OF FAME



1



TETRIS EFFECT

Tetris, yeah? It might be a great game, but it's easy to understand why you'd brush this off as just more Tetris at a glance. Yet Tetsuya Mizuguchi's trippy, transcendent take on the block-based puzzler is nothing short of a masterpiece. Sure, you can play it without PS VR, but in the virtual space it really becomes next level, transforming one of the tightest puzzle games ever made into an emotional ride.



2



THE PERSISTENCE

This first-person horror roguelike offers perfectly sized chunks of survival bursts. It's everything you'd expect from a full PS4 release, but in PS VR it's filled with clever ideas, unique weapons, genuine jump scares, and fab looks – plus great couchplay.

3



REZ INFINITE

Tetsuya Mizuguchi's vision becomes reality in PS VR. This psychedelic rhythm rail shooter has achieved its final form. Its crowning achievement? New level Area X; it's powerful enough to bring players to tears. Worthy of its name, this is a timeless title.

4



THUMPER

Make no mistake: the brave chrome beetle gives Rez a run for its money. Hurling down a violently kaleidoscopic track, pounding notes and scraping round corners is exquisitely tough – and the manic magic is enhanced and perfected in PS VR.

5



ASTRO BOT RESCUE MISSION

This pint-sized adventure packs charm in spades even if it isn't chock-full of challenge. Bringing the classic puzzle platformer formula bang up to date in PS VR, it won't take many levels before you're calling out, "Beam me up, Botty!"

6



BLOOD & TRUTH

The truth? You can't handle the truth. But if you can, then you'll discover one of PS VR's best shooters, tied to the kind of slick cinematic narrative we're used to from Sony's non-VR releases. Blood & Truth is one of the most complete games for PS VR.

7



KEEP TALKING AND NOBODY EXPLODES

Who knew bombs could bring people *together*? With one headsetted Defuser, and as many Experts as you can fit around a 23-page manual, no other VR game comes close for inclusive, endless multiplayer fun.

8



STATIK

Saw meets Portal in this fantastic puzzler. It makes ingenious use of the DualShock 4 by giving every button a specific function. You'll need to use them all to free your hands from the strange box in which they're trapped. An intriguing concept done well.

9



FIREWALL: ZERO HOUR

There's only one game mode, a cat-and-mouse assault to find and either destroy or protect a laptop, but when the shooting is this laser-focused, who could want more? A PS Aim controller is a must to get the most from PS VR's standout shooter.

10



RESIDENT EVIL VII: BIOHAZARD

Can you can go eye-to-eye with the Bakers? Playing in VR raises the tension to almost unbearable levels and has gameplay benefits such as face-aiming, which makes shooting a *lot* easier. A brilliant example of how VR can improve already great games.

11



DOOM VFR

A new take on a classic game, this proves first-person shooters can shine in VR. A mix of control choices, including the PS Aim controller, ensures Doom is as fast and fluid in VR as it's ever been. Every PS VR owner needs this in their collection.

12



TO THE TOP

This creative platform-puzzler enables you to scamper, jump, and skate across its 35 sandbox worlds, with the aid of your PS Move controllers. It's as physically demanding as it is perplexing, and all the better for it. To The Top is a PS VR one-off.

13



STAR TREK: BRIDGE CREW

Mixes the fanboy fantasy of nestling in the Captain's chair (or taking control of the helm, weapons, or engineering section) on a USS starship with the strongest co-op experience on PS VR. This is Star Trek's finest hour on PlayStation.

14



EVERYBODY'S GOLF VR

Golf and virtual reality go together like ham and eggs or rhubarb and custard. In PS VR you swing and chip shots, lean over putts, and become immersed in the act of putting a ball in a small hole. It's near perfection, and one of PS VR's essentials.

15



SPRINT VECTOR

A crazy mix of SSX racing and obstacle course hijinks, Sprint Vector makes use of the best control setup on PS VR to deliver a near perfect experience. A single-player Challenge mode and online races impress; only the poor single-player AI holds it back.

16



BATMAN: ARKHAM VR

Not only is the training mission an unparalleled exercise in wish fulfilment (Wayne Manor! The Batcave! Batarangs!) but the defiantly sharp, if short, campaign is the epilogue to Arkham Knight we needed and deserved. Bats off to you, Rocksteady.

17



THE ELDER SCROLLS V: SKYRIM VR

Though compromises have been made to texture detail and controls, you get all of The Elder Scrolls V: Skyrim, including the expansions, inside PS VR. The scale and organic nature of the world at your feet overcomes any shortcomings.

18



BEAT SABER

PS VR firmly on and PS Move controllers in hand, Beat Saber feels like the game both pieces of hardware were made for. In it you have to master songs and challenges by swiping your neon swords through the air, and dodging with your head.

19



MOSS

Guide adorable mouse heroine Quill through a fantasy storybook world full of virtual puzzles, fights with insects, and perfectly pitched Disney influences. There's no need to say cheese, because you'll be smiling as you play, all day long.

20



ACCOUNTING ++

One of PlayStation's funniest games is a dark, twisted journey into the world of accounting. It's an Inception-like dive into increasingly bizarre and frequently hilarious scenarios that will scratch the itch of any Rick And Morty fan.

21



FARPOINT

This sci-fi shooter is a brilliant showcase for the PS Aim controller, a versatile bit of kit that makes the satisfying range of weapons feel weighty and real. The game matches it, delivering a strong story and challenging co-op for great VR action.

22



KNOCKOUT LEAGUE

Punching things is possibly the least creative use of the VR medium, but when it's used to create a classic arcade boxing sim that plays like a brutal puzzle puncher, it's irresistible. It's also good for you: it tracks your calorie count as you work up a sweat.

23



APEX CONSTRUCT

This story-driven FPS demonstrates five-to-eight hour adventures can work in PS VR. Building its narrative organically through physically exploring the game's world while fending off mechanical creatures with a trusted bow and arrow is a delight. Ambitious.

24



TRANSFERENCE

Come home to these ghosts in the machine. Traipsing through each family member's surreal vision of the apartment they share in first-person horror is a wonderfully dreadful experience. Trespassers will be thoroughly spooked.

25



SUPERHOT VR

Time moves only when you move in this exceptional PS VR first-person shooter that manages to make you feel like you're playing through a slow-mo action movie. The free Superhot Forever update adds even more challenges. Make time for VR bullet time.

PS Now for something completely different



Uncovering the intricacies of a new area is much more fun in videogames than real life. Often digital realms have fantastic sights to find and secrets to uncover – a far cry from the gnawing anguish of hunting for a pasty shop when you accidentally get off at the wrong train station.

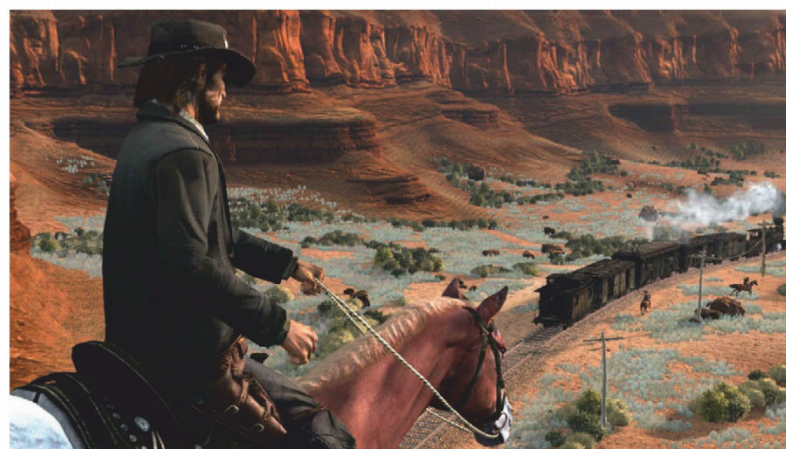
Sometimes you've got to make the most of your money, right? We've all been there: staring at the shelves, only able to afford one game. You choose one, pay up, take it home, bust it open, and have to make the most of it. It'd be a waste not to explore every single marker on the massive open world map, yes?

While it's great to dig deep when it's a game you're really into, feeling you have to just because you've paid your money isn't. Which is why **Horizon Zero Dawn: Complete Edition** being on PS Now (until 7 Apr) is the perfect opportunity to dive into the game and see if it's for you without having to make that commitment. You can have a taste of that world for nothing more than the price of entry.

It's not the only open world game I've been

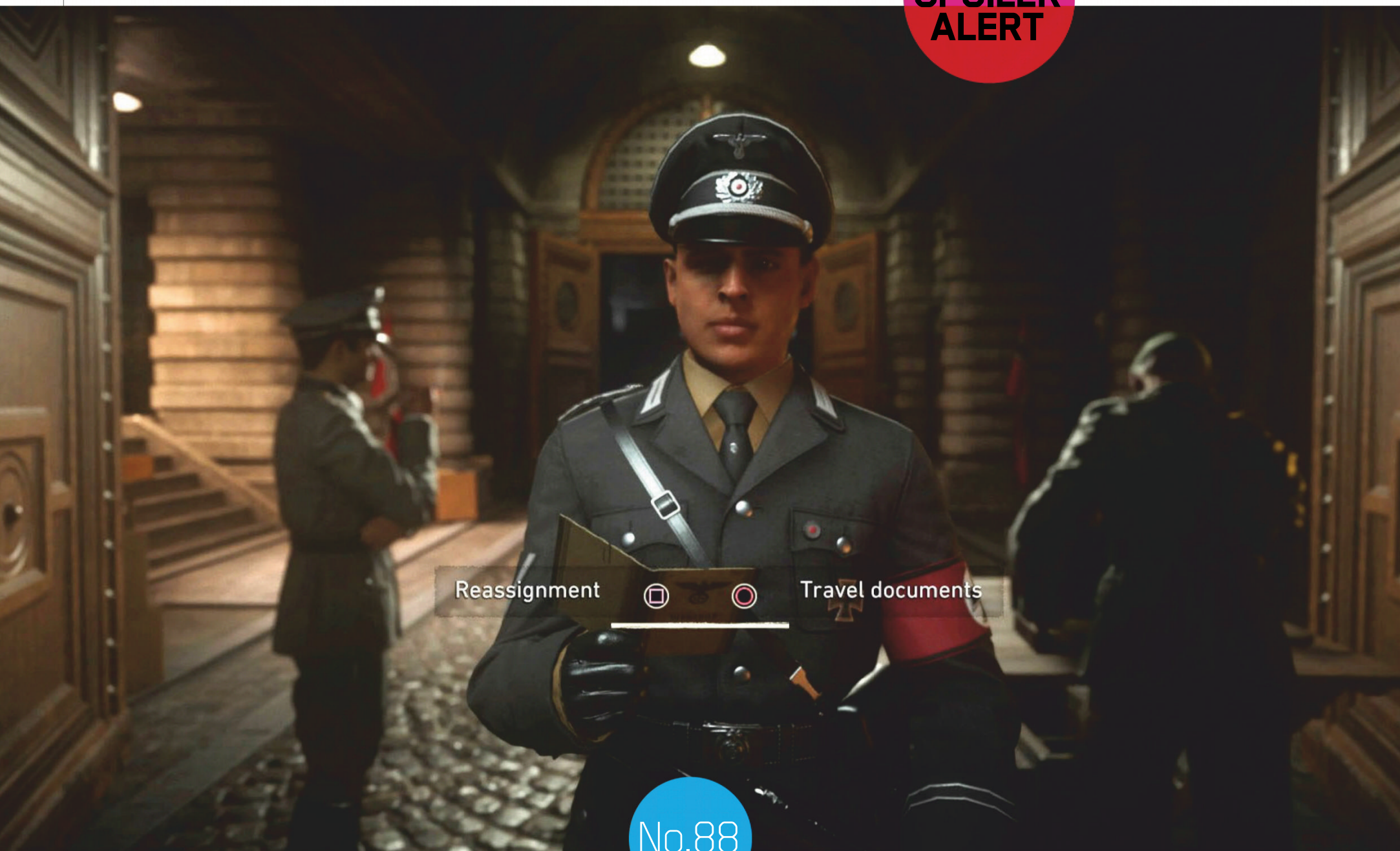
playing on the service this month. After having the chance to follow Aloy's adventures for a second time, I wanted to explore the other worlds on offer. Because PS3 games are also on the service I crossed the frontier of **Red Dead Redemption**, revisiting the dusty New Austin of my past.

How could I resist then hopping over to another PS3 timesink and trudging the Capital Wasteland once more in **Fallout 3**, revisiting the sights and sounds of that expansive and dangerous land? Of course, I then had to immediately pull up **Fallout 4** to contrast and compare how far the series had come. I've not jumped in yet, but **Mafia 2** and **Mafia 3** are now calling to me too. With no obligations to buy each separately, the time to game-hop is here and PS Now.



■ The setting for John Marston's western adventure is one of the most fun open worlds to fool around in and explore for yourself.

LOOK AWAY!
**SPOILER
ALERT**



No.88

Show me your papers

Call Of Duty: WWII's Liberation was tense

 **FORMAT** PS4 / **PUB** ACTIVISION / **DEV** SLEDGEHAMMER GAMES / **RELEASED** 2017 / **SCORE** 9/10

Blasting enemies in the face might be what you spend 90% of your time doing in Call Of Duty, but as far as campaigns are concerned the series' most memorable moments occur when the devs change the formula. Midway through COD: WWII Sledgehammer does just that, with the Liberation mission beginning by placing you in a super-tense historical infiltration mission that's mostly non-combat.

Playing as Camille 'Rousseau' Denis, a French Resistance leader, you must stealth your way into a German HQ in Paris to recover

explosives and rig the charges so that the US soldiers you usually play as can storm the building in the second part of the mission.

You go undercover with Major Crowley; he gives you false papers and leaves you to rendezvous with your contact, Fischer, and exchange briefcases. You have a fake name, Gerda Schneider, and an alibi, all included in your papers. Forget anything? You can glance at your papers using the D-pad.

Nazis verify your identity at checkpoints, where you have to answer questions about your identity. You'll also get quizzed if

you say something untoward and arouse suspicion when searching for Fischer. The checks have simple multiple-choice answers, but needing to stick to a cover story increases tension, and as you progress and things start to stray from the plan you truly begin to feel like you're in a nest of Nazi-armband-wearing vipers, and just trying to make sure you get out unharmed becomes the priority.

Don't get us wrong, we still love the gun blasting that comes later, but this sneaky sequence is unforgettable. We'd love to see more of this in COD. ■

Last
Month

Far Cry 5

Trippy, drug-inspired missions were a highlight, as we fell to Earth to the sound of the sitar.

Next
Month

**Shadow
Of The
Colossus**

With every giant slain, what was it all for? Wander's climax left a mark.

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We visit Bulletstorm developer People Can Fly to go hands-on with its new co-op sci-fantasy shooter!